DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 942 PS 029 327

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TITLE	The Fathering Indicators Framework: A Tool for Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.
INSTITUTION	Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. National Center on Fathers and Families.
SPONS AGENCY	Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD.
PUB DATE	2001-03-00
NOTE	71p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Antisocial Behavior; Attachment Behavior; *Children; Early Parenthood; Family Financial Resources; Family Violence; *Fathers; Interpersonal Competence; Life Style; Measurement Techniques; Measures (Individuals); Mental Health; *Parent Child Relationship; Parenting Styles; Substance Abuse; Well Being
IDENTIFIERS	Coparenting; Incarcerated Parents; *Indicators

ABSTRACT

The Fathering Indicators Framework (FIF) is an evaluation tool designed to help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers conceptualize, examine, and measure change in fathering behaviors in relation to child and family well-being. This report provides a detailed overview of the research and theory informing the development of the FIF. The FIF is divided into six indicator categories: (1) father presence; (2) caregiving; (3) child social competence and academic achievement; (4) cooperative parenting; (5) healthy living; and (6) material and financial contributions. Following an introduction, the report is presented in seven sections. Six sections present a detailed discussion of each indicator category, summarizing what is known about father involvement and fathering behaviors in relation to the category. The seventh section considers how the indicator framework might be used to inform research, practice, and policy, and provides information on applying the framework. Appended are data sources and data collection instruments. (Contains 175 references.) (KB)

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The Fathering Indicators Framework:

A Tool for Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

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About NCOFF

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) was established in 1994 at The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education with core support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation. An interdisciplinary, practice-derived research center, NCOFF's primary goals are to:

- **Expand the knowledge base** on father involvement, family efficacy, and child well-being within multiple disciplines through research and development, integrated discussion, and information building;
- **Strengthen practice** through practitioner-targeted conversations, information dissemination, and collaborative activities; and
- **Contribute to critical policy discussions** by creating a coherent agenda of work that is built around existing and emerging local, state, and federal efforts.

NCOFF's research agenda includes a range of studies that use multiple methodological approaches. We focus on diverse populations of fathers and families—for example, minority families, two-parent families, those living in poverty, and those affected by the changes of welfare reform. Our primary research objective is to augment an existing, cross-disciplinary knowledge base on children, mothers, and families by encouraging the investigation of father-related issues that have emerged and those that have yet to be explored.

With few exceptions, the traditional assumption has been that knowledge flows from research to practice. NCOFF believes that perspective minimizes the potential of practice as a source of information and collaboration. Instead, we support the notion that the relationship between research and practice is bidirectional and reciprocal. Such a relationship can be achieved best by strengthening the links between researchers and practitioners, by establishing relationships of mutual learning, and by contributing to policy formulation.

NCOFF Core Learnings

NCOFF's research, practice, and policy activities have been developed around seven Core Learnings, which were distilled from the first-hand experiences of practitioners serving fathers, mothers, children, and families. The Core Learnings now serve as an organizing framework around which the Center conducts its work. They also provide the field with guidelines for examining, supporting, testing, and interrogating key issues.

The seven Core Learnings offer an important lens through which policymakers might learn more about the implications and impact of legislation and policy decisions on the lives of large numbers of fathers, mothers, children, and families. They also capture salient issues experienced and felt deeply by many fathers and families—those who are financially secure as well as those who are the most vulnerable to poverty and hardship.

The Seven Core Learnings on Fathers and Families

1. **Fathers care**—even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.
2. **Father presence matters**—in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.
3. **Joblessness and unemployment** are major impediments to family formation and father involvement.
4. **Systemic barriers**—in existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment—operate to create obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed "underground fathers," men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems.
5. **Co-parenting**—a growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills needed to share parenting responsibilities.
6. **Role transitions**—the transition from biological father to committed parent has significant development implications for young fathers.
7. **Intergenerational learning**—the behaviors of young parents, both fathers and mothers, are influenced significantly by intergenerational beliefs and practices within their families of origin.

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THE FATHERING INDICATORS FRAMEWORK:

A Tool for Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Fathering Indicators Framework (FIF) is designed to help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers conceptualize, examine, and measure change in fathering behaviors in relation to child and family well-being. The FIF may be adapted for multiple purposes and used with different populations of fathers (i.e., married fathers present in the home; never-married fathers; noncustodial, nonresidential fathers involved with their children; and noncustodial, nonresidential fathers making the transition to responsible fatherhood).

As shown in Figure 1, the FIF is divided into six indicator categories: (1) father presence; (2) caregiving; (3) child social competence and academic achievement; (4) cooperative parenting; (5) healthy living; and (6) material and financial contributions. A matrix was created for each category, listing: (a) potential indicators, (b) existing or potential sources of information, and (c) methodological approaches.

The full instrument, which contains the complete set of indicators for each category, can be obtained by contacting the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF).

The FIF is an evaluation tool designed to help researchers, practitioners, and policymakers examine and measure change in fathering behaviors.

A Background on the Fathering Indicators Framework

Over the last decade, the field of fathers and families has developed into an increasingly important area of family research, practice, and policy. One of the emerging challenges for the field—perhaps its greatest challenge—is to determine whether the new policies and concepts regarding responsible fathering are making a difference or have the potential to do so. The questions are fundamental ones: *What counts as positive change? How do we measure and understand the effects of that change for children, families, and communities?* The answers to these questions have important implications for children's emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being. They also have great significance for a range of stakeholders:

- For **researchers**, who study these issues and conduct evaluations of programs;
- For **practitioners** in social service agencies, schools, and community-based organizations, who wish to provide on-site, useful services to children, families, and their communities;
- For **communities** that want to support children and families and increase father involvement;
- For **families and fathers** themselves, who seek to eliminate social vulnerability and risk for their children; and
- For **policymakers**, who need to formulate effective initiatives that support children and families within the constraints of limited budgets.

Recognizing a need for a measurement construct that could be used with diverse populations and draw upon mixed methods of analysis, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) convened a group of researchers, practitioners, and

Figure 1
Fathering Indicators Framework (FIF) Categories

Fathering Indicator Category	Operational Definitions
Father Presence	A three-part process involving father engagement, availability, and responsibility in relationship to children
Caregiving	Providing nurturance and performing routine tasks necessary to maintain children's emotional well-being, physical health, and appearance
Children's Social Competence and Academic Achievement	Actively engaging with children and others in developing and enhancing their social competence and academic achievement
Cooperative Parenting	Fathers, mothers, and other caregivers establishing a supportive, cooperative interdependent relationship aimed at optimal child development
Fathers' Healthy Living	Providing a role model through healthy lifestyle, education, and appropriate social behaviors that teach work and personal ethics, as well as social norms, to help children grow and become productive members of society
Material and Financial Contributions	Engaging in consistent activities that provide material and financial support to children

What indicators of positive father engagement, family efficacy, community involvement, and public policies and investments can serve as markers of change?

policymakers in May of 1998 to initiate a conversation about the measurement and evaluation of positive fathering. The group, which came to be called the NCOFF Working Group on Fathering Indicators, met for the purposes of identifying and developing a set of themes and indicators that could be used to evaluate father-focused programs, efforts, and activities, as well as to guide research—both inquiries of small field studies and analyses of large, national datasets—on fathering behaviors and practices. The Working Group's initial meeting focused on three areas within current discussions of fathers and families: (!) responsible father behaviors; (2) child health, safety, and well-being; and (3) family efficacy.

The Working Group's approach to developing fathering indicators was based on three considerations:

1. Increasing efforts at national, state, and local levels of government indicate that the field should develop a tool to gauge improvement in fathering and family well-being that can be used across research and practice in order to inform policymaking.
2. The uses of the framework should range from enhancing program development to conducting formative and summative evaluations to collecting field data through different forms of inquiry—basic, applied, and policy research.
3. The framework and the indicators should contribute to an understanding of what needs to be done to ensure positive father involvement, improve children's development, and increase family viability; it should also identify barriers and inform the field regarding appropriate pathways to change.

The Working Group initially identified five indicator categories, which were further defined by a larger group of fathering and family researchers and practitioners. In each case, at least one researcher was commissioned by NCOFF to review the potential indicators listed in the assigned category; add to, delete from, or refine the list, as necessary; and write a short background and application summary for the category. Practitioners collaborated with researchers on the development of both the category items and the resulting matrix representing the full instrument.

The NCOFF Working Group and other father- and family-focused grantees of The Annie E. Casey Foundation subsequently reviewed the draft framework. NCOFF also interviewed specialists by telephone or in person to solicit their suggestions. Comments from these reviews were analyzed and integrated into the draft framework to create the six categories that currently constitute the FIF: (1) father presence; (2) caregiving; (3) child social competence and academic achievement; (4) cooperative parenting; (5) healthy living; and (6) material and financial contributions.

In order to validate, extend, and refine the FIF, we conducted a series of focus groups with more than 40 field practitioners who had not participated in the NCOFF Working Group on Fathering Indicators. The focus groups were conducted in two large Northeastern cities, in a large Midwestern city, in a rural region located in the Northeast, and in a large Southeast-

ern city. Most of the practitioners were men, with the exception of five women. Their programs addressed the needs of a wide range of fathers and families, including early childcare and education programs, early/teen fatherhood support services, divorce support services, abusive household support services, services to incarcerated fathers, and parenting services.

The Practical Context for Fathering Indicators

The overarching question that specialists in the field must consider is: *How will efforts around fathers and families be judged?* Beyond this basic assessment, what changes should we strive to effect for children and families through the promotion of improved fathering? More specifically, what indicators of positive father engagement, family efficacy, community involvement, and public policies and investments can serve as markers of change? How do we accurately measure and describe the impact of individual programs without setting overly optimistic expectations? To answer these questions, the field requires a framework or set of indicators that will:

- Identify the broad themes of father involvement that lend themselves to assessment through quantitative, qualitative, or ethnographic approaches, or through some combination of these methods;
- Increase the likelihood that the information needed for measurement will be collected in primary domains (for example, policy, practice, research, communities, and families); and
- Determine the best ways to obtain information regarding changes in father involvement.

The body of literature on fathers and families has expanded recently—including the addition of different definitions of father involvement and the description of different assessment strategies currently in use. This work has generated at least as many questions as answers. At the same time, new legislation and initiatives around fatherhood have emerged in the absence of sound indicators to inform policymaking. Thus, the gaps identified in the research, the needs of practitioners faced with evaluating programs, and the requirements of increased policy and legislative discussions provide the backdrop against which the FIF was developed.

Use of the FIF by Practitioners, Researchers, and Policymakers

The FIF is intended to provide a useful schematic summary of data sources, methods, and variables that can aid in the field's efforts. It has the potential to provide information about the effects of a program on a father; the effects of a father's participation or change of behavior on a child or family; or the ways in which these effects—on fathers, children, and families—are threaded together to enable men to become positively involved with their children, the mothers of their children, and families in general. It is designed specifically to be a tool that can be used by or

The FIF also provides flexibility and comprehensiveness for policymakers who need to assess particular policy initiatives.

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adapted for different audiences:

- **Practitioners.** The FIF can inform practitioners' particular concerns about a variety of program and intervention issues, as well as support internal formative evaluations and the monitoring of participant progress. For example, family therapists can use the framework to guide cooperative parenting training by examining the appropriate indicator, reviewing the relevant literature, and developing plans that facilitate a family becoming more oriented toward a cooperative arrangement.
- **Researchers.** Researchers who are conducting studies on fathers or who are engaging in process or outcome evaluations of fathering programs can use the FIF to launch discussions of innovative topics regarding fathers. Further, researchers can examine the potential sources of information provided in the framework and develop studies with similar data sources and research designs, leading to better evaluations of program outcomes. For example, researchers who wish to contribute to the knowledge base of fathering behaviors and child development could use the framework to construct theoretical models of developmental outcomes and family processes.
- **Policymakers.** The FIF also provides flexibility and comprehensiveness for policymakers who need to assess particular policy initiatives, such as child support enforcement and its possible effects on fathers' involvement with their children.

With the assistance of skilled researchers and evaluators, practitioners will be able to design and implement very useful evaluations of their interventions using the FIF.

Users of the FIF do not need to be well-versed in all of the father involvement or family studies literature in order to apply it. This document provides a background of the relevant issues for each indicator category. Perhaps the most important requirement is an ability to tap the sources of reliable information listed in the framework—for example, many of the sources are not public records, but rather public databases. One would need to know which sources provide the necessary information. For research purposes, users would need to be familiar with each method cited. For example, in order to apply more effectively the public datasets listed in the framework, such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLS-Y) or the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), users need to become more familiar with the organization producing the dataset and content of the particular database of interest. Most of the datasets can be accessed on websites (see Appendix), which contain much of the necessary information (for example, what measures are included, who is surveyed, and how to locate copies of code books).

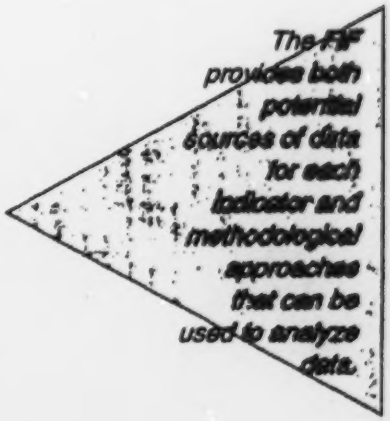
Some of the indicators may be assessed using information from federal databases, such as the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Department of Justice. Census Bureau data are readily available to the public and can be easily accessed on the Internet. Data from these sources may be particularly useful in addressing several of the healthy living indicators, such as the

number of teenage births and the number of people involved with the criminal justice system. While these datasets reveal information about gender and age differences, they do not always indicate specific information about fathers.

Practitioners and policymakers who plan to employ this framework for research or evaluation purposes should be aware that some of the indicators require specialized knowledge and experience in research methods and analysis, particularly when making use of scales that have been designed to measure complex constructs. A user would need to be knowledgeable about how to administer the instruments, how to assess their limitations, and how to interpret the findings. With the assistance of skilled researchers and evaluators, however, practitioners will be able to design and implement very useful evaluations of their interventions using the FIF.

Evaluators, practitioners, and others working with programs may want to add indicators to measure change along a particular program's focus or in specific attitudes and behaviors of fathers. For example, programs that place a great deal of emphasis on workforce-related problems may want to add indicators to the contributions section to determine whether fathers' financial contributions have changed as a result of participating in the program. Additionally, while each category can stand alone, it may only give a limited perspective on the scope and nature of change. For example, child-focused researchers and practitioners may be more concerned initially with caregiving, but find that to understand the issues in any of the indicator categories may raise questions or inform the user about behaviors in another.

The FIF provides both potential sources of data for each indicator and methodological approaches that can be used to analyze data. Some sources of information will be more accessible than others (for example, fathers, mothers, or children participating in a program). To collect information from different sources, users must develop appropriate protocols, questionnaires, or surveys. Depending upon users' resources, they may need to seek out assistance for analysis. NCOFF can provide the names of its consultants and collaborators in different regions of the country, or users can contact specialists from local universities, research centers, and other research and evaluation institutions and organizations.


The FIF provides both potential sources of data for each indicator and methodological approaches that can be used to analyze data.

Structure of the Report

The remaining sections of this report present a detailed discussion of each indicator category. We provide a background summary of what we know about father involvement and fathering behaviors in relation to the category—as identified in the research literature, evaluations of programs, and policy reports—as well as what we need to know. We also consider how the indicators framework might be used to inform research, practice, and policy, as well as what the user needs to consider to apply the framework.

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THE FATHER PRESENCE INDICATOR CATEGORY

Father presence involves the capacity to form and maintain significant supportive attachments to a child and the child's caregivers over his or her life course. It includes the ability to adapt to maturational changes in the child, in other caregivers, and in oneself so that optimal child development is achieved. To increase the likelihood that father presence results in a positive interaction, he must have the capacity to accept and work with other caregivers for the child's welfare, even if the nature of the father's relationships with others and residence with the child have significantly changed because of relationship termination, divorce, separation, or remarriage. Since our principal concern is optimum child development, our indicators highlight those aspects of father presence that are most influential in promoting social, emotional, and intellectual competence in children. To that end, research suggests that indicators of father presence should include the quality and quantity of father-child interactions; fathers' accessibility to children; their assumption of responsibility for helping their children develop; and their ability to work constructively with other caregivers (see the section on Cooperative Parenting Indicators).

Father presence involves the capacity to form and maintain significant supportive attachments to a child and the child's caregivers over the child's life course.

A sample listing of presence indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and source of data can be found in Figure 2.

Father Presence

Over the past two decades, researchers have refined their efforts to distinguish among various types of father involvement, and the resulting literature allows researchers to define and describe father-child "presence" with greater precision (Barrett and Baruch, 1987; Radin, 1993; Parke, 1996). Lamb and his colleagues (Lamb, 1987; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine, 1985) offered the most influential scheme, which consists of three components: (1) *responsibility*, (2) *availability*, and (3) *engagement*. Responsibility refers to the role that a father takes in ascertaining that the child is cared for and arranging for the availability of resources (Lamb, Pleck,

Charnov, and Levine, 1987, p. 125). Availability is a related concept concerning the father's potential for interaction, by virtue of being present or being accessible to the child (whether or not direct interaction is occurring). Engagement refers to the father's direct interaction or contact with his child through caregiving and shared activities. Past family and child development studies rarely collected information on all of these aspects of father-child involvement, although many sample surveys and panel studies are now attempting to do so (Federal Interagency Forum, 1998; Child Trends, 1998). There is general consensus among social and behavioral scientists that measuring these three aspects of father-child relations provides the best opportunity for an assessment of the potential impact of fathers' behaviors on child development.

Most practitioners, policymakers, and researchers recognize the importance of measuring both the quantity and quality of fathers' contact

Figure 2
Sample Father Presence Indicators

Father Presence: A three-part process involving father engagement, availability, and responsibility in relation to the child.

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Quality of the father's emotional attachment to his children Quality of the children's emotional attachment to father	Father, mother, child reports (see Lewin Group, 1997, Ch. 4). Surveys, interviews, observations, videotape coding.
Frequency of communication with children Quality of communication with children Frequency of emotional interchanges Quality of emotional interchanges	Father, mother, child reports, service programs. Time diaries, surveys, observations, interviews, administrative records (courts, schools, employment). Ethnographies, in-depth interviews, focus groups.
Increased number of father contacts with children Increased number of father visitations with children	Parents, programs, court records. Surveys, time diaries, interviews, and observations.
Number of fathers who initiated contact with children for the first time	Parents, programs, CSE. Case histories, surveys.
Number of legal paternity establishments Number of nonmarital births	Demographic indicators from National Surveys (CPS, NLSY, NSFH, PSID, etc.) (See Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998; Lewin Group, 1997; National Center for Children in Poverty, 1997). Other potential sources for demographic information includes parent reports, school records, program case files, CSE, etc. Survey and agency estimates.

Note: The first 9 indicators were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.

Responsibility—the managerial functions of parenting—is one of the least studied and even less understood aspects of fathering.

with and responsibility for their children. For example, Palkovitz's (1997) list of 119 "ways to be involved in parenting" includes everything from baking cookies to filing taxes and is organized into 15 overlapping domains. Using these categories, the Federal Interagency Forum (1998) examined the father involvement assessment strategies of 15 large social science family datasets. The Forum report showed that all but one dataset measured father "presence/absence," with most also measuring fathers' "availability," "teaching," "monitoring," and "affection." The report also revealed that about one-half of these large datasets measured fathers' "communication" or "emotional support." Only a few measured "thought processes" (for example, worrying, dreaming, and evaluating) or "planning" (for example, birthdays, vacations, friend visits, and savings). No surveys measured "sharing interests" (for example, providing for instruction or reading together), "errands" (for example, driving or picking up items), or "child maintenance" (for example, cleaning or cooking for the child) (Federal Interagency Forum, 1998, pp. 144, 400; Palkovitz, 1997, pp. 209-210). The findings from this study revealed that structural availability measures of fatherhood (for example, presence/absence) are by far the most common and that, while father-child interaction is increasingly being assessed, father responsibility is rarely measured.

Responsibility. Responsibility is one of the least studied and even less understood aspects of fathering. As noted above, this form of involvement refers to the managerial functions of parenting, including the ways in which fathers organize opportunities for their children to participate in a wide range of activities and experiences. It is important to distinguish between intrafamily and extrafamily management. In the former case, parents organize the child's home environment by making certain parts of the home (such as the playroom) and/or certain objects (such as toys and games) available, while limiting access to other parts (such as the dining room) and/or objects (such as guns and fragile objects). In addition, fathers play a role as provider and/or restrictor of opportunities for interaction with other social agents and institutions outside the family. This includes providing access to other play and recreational partners by regulating children's contact with these individuals; it also includes regulation of access to schools, churches, and organized recreational opportunities (for example, sports), as well as informal walks, trips, and outings.

Availability. Measures of father availability focus on the potential for interaction when the father is available or accessible to the child. It typically quantifies the number of hours or days that fathers are physically present and potentially available for activity or interaction with their children, regardless of whether interaction actually takes place (Lamb, 1987). Examples of this type of availability are reading the paper while the child plays nearby or cooking a meal while the child does homework. Fathers' avail-

ability appears to have increased over the years—from one-half that of mothers prior to the 1980s to nearly two-thirds as much in the 1990s (Pleck, 1997). The changes in fathers' availability over time may reflect an increase in maternal work outside the home, as well as a change in societal expectations of fathers' involvement with their children and their role as helpmates to their partners.

Father availability often is measured only in families in which the father co-resides with the child (for example, two-parent, married-couple families). However, it should also be measured in families with nonresidential fathers, particularly since paternal availability may be affected negatively when fathers do not live with their children. In general, nonresident fathers are less involved with their children, and are at great risk of losing regular contact with their child over time. Father availability (along with engagement and responsibility) should be measured for those fathers who live in a household different from their children's, as well as those who are coresident. In addition, the availability of stepfathers and other "father figures" should be measured under this general category.

Engagement. Our research on the engagement aspect of paternal involvement has yielded a distinction between "fatherhood" and "fatherwork." Hawkins and Dollahite (1997, pp. 20-21) suggest that positive (generative) fathering is best conceived as "fatherwork" (sustained efforts men actually undertake with and for children) rather than as "fatherhood" (structural arrangements and cultural or normative expectations). While acknowledging that the structural aspects of fatherhood—marriage, paternity, and co-residence—can be important, we suggest that direct and indirect fatherwork—those father-child interactions and child maintenance activities that long have been recognized as having substantial influence on child development—should form the core of any father presence measures. We therefore suggest an activity-based approach to the study of fathers, rather than the simple structural approach promoted by some researchers and political advocates (for example, Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996).

As we attempt to measure father presence in children's lives, it is also critical to distinguish among the different contexts in which engagement takes place. Prior literature identifies at least three different contexts: (1) direct interaction by providing care to the young child through activities such as feeding, diapering, and dressing or to the older child through direct verbal interaction and providing sick care (see the Caregiving Indicators section); (2) play, including physical play, games, and other forms of recreation and sports (see the Caregiving Indicators section); and (3) teaching, typically focused on achieving socialization goals through direct instruction, coaching, or disciplining (see the Children's Social Competence and Academic Achievement Indicators section).

As we attempt to measure father presence in children's lives, it is also critical to distinguish among the different contexts in which engagement takes place.

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The measurement of father presence is a complicated issue, because the concerns of research, practice, and policy are not always congruent.

Conclusion

Within each of the three categories of father presence, it is important to make two further distinctions.

1. **It is critical to differentiate the amount of involvement from the quality of involvement, in light of the long-established finding that both quality and quantity are important to child development and well-being.** Prior work (Parke, 1996; Pleck, 1997) suggests that the quality of father-child involvement is more clearly linked to children's developmental outcomes than the quantity of involvement. More involvement is sometimes better if the quality is high, but more involvement without attention to quality is not always linked with better child outcomes. In fact, increased father involvement can be linked to poorer developmental outcomes for the child if the quality is inferior or harmful—that is, physically or emotionally abusive.
2. **As research has shown (Pleck, 1981; 1997), absolute as well as relative (in relation to partner) indices of involvement are independent and may affect both children and adults in different ways.** Thus, measures of the frequency and quality of father-child presence in terms of interactions, availability, and responsibility should be collected directly from fathers. Whenever possible, similar information should be collected simultaneously from (and about) mothers and other childcare providers.

The measurement of father presence is a complicated issue, because the concerns of research, practice, and policy are not always congruent. But it is essential to emphasize the need for collecting data on father presence to address several essential questions. In particular, we need to know more about: (1) how the meaning of fatherhood for men, women, and children is modified by ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic background; (2) what the impact of different forms of fathering is on men's own development and well-being; (3) what the impact of different forms of fathering is on women's development and well-being; and (4) how fathers and other male figures affect children's development, with a special emphasis on variation according to class, ethnicity, and race. Answering some of these questions requires detailed information on the quality as well as quantity of father-child presence and data collection on and from mothers, children, and fathers themselves. To address such questions and design relevant policies and programs, we will need to abandon our fixation on calculating father presence versus father absence. Only by moving beyond simply counting marriages, living arrangements, or support payments will we be able to isolate how and why fathers can make an actual difference in their children's lives. And only by focusing on how fathers build and sustain connections with their children in multiple social and economic contexts will we be able to plan for more child- and father-friendly policies and programs in the future.

Note that the FIF identifies specific structural, interactional, and contextual indicators of father presence. In addition, the matrix provides cursory listings of potential sources of information and quantitative and qualitative methods that might be used to collect such information. Depending on the specific objectives of research, it will be necessary to expand and refine these data sources and methods sections of the framework. Many national and regional datasets are beginning to include data on fathers—for example, the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLS-Y). Rather than listing each dataset separately for each indicator, interested readers are encouraged to refer to more inclusive data reports (for example, Federal Interagency Forum, 1998). In addition, it is essential to collect data using various measures of child outcomes, in terms of the variables assessing the social, emotional, physical, and academic development, competence, and well-being of the child. It is our hope that the FIF will stimulate thinking about how to assess father presence more effectively in the future.

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THE CAREGIVING INDICATOR CATEGORY

Caregiving is a critical and universal aspect of childrearing, encompassing all of those nurturing and life-sustaining acts that help to ensure optimal child outcomes, especially physical, emotional, and psychological development. It requires that the caregiver have an understanding of children's developmental needs, a capacity to effectively respond to those needs, and an ability to work with other caregivers to maximize the child's development. The search for appropriate indicators of responsible fathering by family advocates, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers has expanded beyond traditional descriptors of breadwinning to include an array of tasks and behaviors—such as nurturing and caregiving—formerly associated with the maternal role. The following discussion identifies the key findings from research that support the development of paternal caregiving indicators.

A sample listing of caregiving indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and source data can be found in Figure 3.

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Paternal Caregiving

Fathers' caregiving provides for children's basic needs, including feeding them, ensuring they get sufficient rest, and protecting them from danger. Caregiving also involves nurturing expressions and behaviors that convey to children a sense of emotional engagement, love, attachment, and security. These behaviors involve culturally appropriate physical acts of affection and comfort (such as touching, hugging, kissing, and cuddling), verbal expressions (such as comforting with reassuring words and sounds), and behaviors that help to maintain communication between children and caregivers (including listening and giving timely responses to children's concerns). In addition, caregiving involves generativity—that is, psychological and emotional investment in the caregiving role and in the children for whom one provides such care (Erikson, 1969; Erikson and Erikson, 1981). Finally, paternal caregiving includes the managerial tasks that permit

Figure 3
Sample Caregiving Indicators

Caregiving: Providing nurturance and performance of routine tasks necessary to the maintenance of the child's emotional well-being, physical health, and appearance.

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Awareness of children's social-emotional development Responsive to children's emotional reactions Children feel safe in the presence of father Nature and quality of father-child interaction during solo care Provides physical care to the children (e.g., changes diapers, grooms) Consistently arranges safe environment and monitors children's safety	Father, mother, child, and other caregiver reports.
Interest in children's health	Immunization reports. Physician, dentist, father, mother, and child (if old enough to be interviewed) reports. National datasets (e.g., National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health).
Improvement in children's mental health	ADHD medical reports. Physician, father, mother, grandparent and/or other family member reports.

Note: The 8 indicators in this list were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.

caregivers to cooperatively and consistently meet children's basic needs (such as shopping for food and clothing). The quality of caregiving and parenting can have a profound effect on children. Children who receive inconsistent, neglectful, or inadequate physical and emotional caregiving are at greater risk for negative developmental outcomes (McLoyd, 1990; Ray and McLoyd, 1986). In high-risk communities characterized by chronic long-term poverty, a nurturing and supportive parent is the single most important source of resiliency in children (Luthar and Zigler, 1991; Wakschlag and Hans, 1999).

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Fathers' roles in caregiving have increasingly interested researchers (Pleck, 1997; Russell and Radin, 1983) due in part to the large numbers of mothers entering the workforce (Pleck, 1997), evolving societal expectations of fathers' roles (Pleck and Pleck, 1997), and changing patterns of family formation and organization. Both fathers and mothers have had to seriously consider how they will negotiate their roles as parents, provide children with consistent and competent caregiving, and provide the emotional investment and support they require. As women work outside of the

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Research on paternal caregiving has tended to focus on a small number of indicators, including fathers' presence at the birth of the child, involvement in routine caregiving, and the extent of involvement in solo childcare.

home, others—often fathers—are expected to assume childcare responsibilities traditionally performed by mothers. Increasing evidence suggests that while mothers, including mothers in two-earner families, continue to perform the majority of caregiving (Barnett and Shen, 1997; Nock and Kingston, 1998), many fathers are assuming a share of these responsibilities. In two-parent families, the critical factors in fathers' participation in caregiving appear to be the number of hours mothers work outside the home for wages (Blair and Johnson, 1992; Ross, 1987) and the number of children they have. The more hours mothers work and the more children there are in the household, the greater is the likelihood that fathers will provide caregiving (Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane, 1992). Additionally, fathers' caregiving is influenced by cultural norms, expectations, and psychological characteristics such as motivation (Ross, 1987). As Lewis (1997) has suggested, father involvement is influenced by the willingness of both fathers and others to "write [themselves] into a role away from the center stage of family interactions" (p. 123).

The intimate nature of caregiving provides a context for emotional engagement between father and child. Within the past decade, studies of father involvement have highlighted the importance of fathers' emotional connection with their children (Coltrane and Parke, 1998), suggesting that positive father involvement is an important factor in children's socio-emotional development. For example, during infancy, secure attachment to the father has been associated with positive emotional development and the capacity for empathy in school-age children (Biller and Trotter, 1994). Recent work indicates that fathers' behaviors are predictors of children's social competence above and beyond mothers' behaviors and, in some studies, beyond mothers' amount of interaction with their children (Biller, 1993). More specifically, several studies have found that fathers' influences in children's emotional development are as important as mothers' influences (Pruett and Pruett, 1998). The children of fathers who use a more controlling interaction style exhibit more negative effects. Recently, it has been reported that, more than a mother's control of children's negative emotions, a father's control of such emotions is related to lower emotion regulation in their children. In addition, the age of the child may influence father-child interaction. For example, research has generally reported similarities between maternal and paternal disciplinary (Hart, et al., 1992) and interactional styles (Lewis, 1997) during the preschool years. However, during adolescence, fathers are more likely than mothers to use physical punishment, to encourage independence (Power and Shanks, 1989), and to be more assertive, especially with sons (Steinberg, 1981; Steinberg and Hill, 1978).

Research on paternal caregiving has tended to focus on a small number of indicators, including fathers' presence at the birth of the child, involvement in routine caregiving, and the extent of involvement in solo childcare (Russell and Radin, 1983). Father participation in hospital-based

childbirth has increased significantly over the last 20 years from 27 percent of fathers in the 1970s to 85 percent in the 1990s (Parke, 1996). The expectation that fathers will participate in childbirth classes and be present during both labor and delivery cuts across all social classes. Paternal presence at childbirth appears to have positive short-term effects on mothers and fathers. Being present in the delivery room and involved in the birthing process is related to the mother's positive feelings about the delivery, the father's positive reaction to birth, and the couple's positive feelings about their relationship (Entwisle and Doering, 1981). In addition, fathers who have actually delivered their babies, through coaching by obstetricians, tend to be more involved in the infant's daily care at home three months after delivery than are fathers who did not deliver their newborns (Shapiro, Diamond, and Greenberg, 1995). However, Hanson and Bozett's (1987) caution is well worth noting: We neither know about the long-term effects, if any, of participation in child birth on the father-child relationship nor understand the effects of delivery room presence on those fathers who for cultural, psychological, or other reasons do not participate—or participate less willingly—in childbirth.

The majority of research on fathers' caregiving has focused on young children. In general, our understanding of fathers' care of school age and adolescent children is limited. Increasingly, research on fathers who reside with their children suggests that they are assuming more childcare responsibilities than did their predecessors (O'Connell, 1993). One study of fathers of Head Start children (Fagan, 1998) found that they were accessible to their children an average of 4.5 hours per day, interacted directly with them 1.38 hours per day around tasks requiring emotional engagement, and spent .4 hours playing with the child. Fathers reported engaging with their children around specific childrearing tasks such as reading, talking, and playing. However, from infancy through adolescence, fathers are less likely than mothers to be involved in direct caregiving activities and less likely to perform the managerial functions related to caregiving (Parke, 1995; Pleck, 1997).

The degree to which fathers can and do engage in caregiving activities may change over the life course and within different cultural contexts. These factors are little understood. Differences in levels of father-child engagement may also be influenced by differences in fathers' experiences, capacities, and characteristics. In addition, characteristics of the child may shape father caregiving. For example, research suggests contradictory findings related to fathers of children with disabilities. Some studies report that fathers of disabled children may become more involved in childcare than fathers of children without these challenges (Tallman, 1965), while other research suggests that they may be less involved (Bristol, et al., 1988).

A dearth of both longitudinal studies and studies of father caregiving within a variety of contexts adds to a lack of understanding about the factors that contribute to paternal caregiving from infancy to adolescence.

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Research on fathers' caregiving tends to describe the frequency of care and the task performed, but does not focus on the quality of father care or its relationship to child outcomes (Davis and Perkins, 1996). The bulk of this research focuses on fathers and children who reside together. It is apparent that divorced fathers who do not live with their children are at risk of becoming less involved with their children's care over time (Seltzer, 1991). Longitudinal data suggest that many unmarried fathers are likely to be as involved with their children at the end of their first year as they are two years later (McLanahan et al., 1998). However, in general, researchers have not investigated the degree to which unmarried fathers are able to sustain a consistent caregiving role over the first 18 years of a child's life. An important exception is a longitudinal study (Furstenberg and Harris, 1993) of children born to adolescent mothers, which, while not an investigation of caregiving *per se*, does suggest that unmarried fathers' involvement with children decreases during the critical years of childhood and adolescence. The authors reported that, by the children's adolescence, only 46 percent of fathers were in contact with them and only 14 percent lived with them.

Fathers and the Solo Care of Children. Solo care of children requires that the caregiver have a working knowledge of the child's developmental needs, an ability to manage the child's environment, and the trust of other caregivers. Solo paternal childcare, during some portion of the child's day, may be more demanding than sharing childcare tasks with the mother or acting as her helper. Research indicates that few fathers in the United States provide solo care to children (Davis and Perkins, 1996). However, social changes (such as increases in two-earner families) and the increasing availability of resources (such as low-cost day care) may have begun to alter the frequency of paternal solo care. In particular, mothers' participation in the workforce and the family's social class may influence fathers' participation in solo caregiving, which is clearly on the rise. For example, in 1991, 23 percent of married working mothers reported that fathers were the primary care providers to their children, in comparison to 17 percent of fathers in 1977 (O'Connell, 1993). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the percentage of all families with children under 18 that were maintained by a single father increased from 1 percent in 1970 to 6 percent in 1998. Despite the increase, little research has investigated what fathers do during periods of solo care; how their role affects their feelings about their own competence as a caregiver; how care influences their relationship with their children and partner; and whether their care affects child outcomes.

Researchers have not investigated the degree to which unmarried fathers are able to sustain a consistent caregiving role over the first 18 years of a child's life.

In less economically advantaged families, fathers reportedly played a critical role in caring for young children. In one study (Hans, Ray, Bernstein, and Halpern, 1995) low-income, unmarried African-American mothers stated that, after themselves, fathers were the most frequent providers of care to very young children. A majority of mothers (53 percent) indicated that fathers provided solo care to toddlers at least one or

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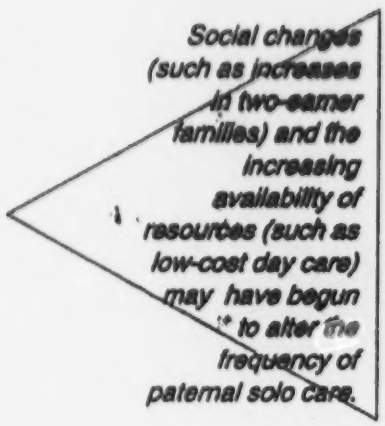
two days per week. Similarly, Cohen (1998) found that 43 percent of low-income fathers, compared to 24 percent of more economically advantaged fathers, care for their young children while their wives work. In addition, 42 percent of fathers in blue-collar and service occupations, in comparison to 18 percent of fathers in managerial and professional jobs, look after their children while their wives work (U.S. Census, 1997).

Conclusion

The potential to understand how fathers contribute to child well-being, beyond financial support, has increased in recent years, as family advocates, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers have expanded their efforts to identify appropriate indicators of responsible fathering. As mothers continue to enter the workforce and fathers assume more direct responsibility for childcare, the salience of paternal caregiving will only increase, in particular those aspects of the fathers' role that were once only associated with mothers. While the effects of maternal care have been studied extensively, similar attention to the paternal role has only recently been pursued. Studies that have been completed tend to focus on a narrow range of measures, such as presence at birth or rates of solo childcare. Clearly, the field requires more comprehensive research on the degree to which fathers emerge in a range of caregiving activities across the life course and within a diverse set of family environments to fully understand the complexities of this role for different types of fathers.


Social changes (such as increases in two-earner families) and the increasing availability of resources (such as low-cost day care) may have begun to alter the frequency of paternal solo care.

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The Children's Social Competence and Academic Achievement Indicator Category

Fathers, mothers, and other significant caregivers of children play an important role in the social competence and academic achievement of their children.

Fathers, mothers, and other significant caregivers of children play an important role in the social competence and academic achievement of their children. While the degree of parental involvement is highly important in all areas of children's development, the quality of that involvement is also critical to positive child outcomes. In this section of the FIF, we focus on fathers' behaviors that influence various social competence and academic achievement outcomes of children. We draw heavily on two frameworks from the developmental literature: Darling and Steinberg's (1993) definitions of parenting styles and behaviors and Baumrind's (1991) typology of parenting styles.

A sample listing of socialization and cognitive/academic achievement indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and sources of data can be found in Figure 4.

Parental Styles and Behaviors

Darling and Steinberg (1993) identified a useful framework for categorizing parental behaviors. According to this framework, parenting behavior consists of a combination of parenting styles and practices. Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined parenting style as a "constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed." Parenting practices are behaviors defined by specific content and socialization goals, such as attending school functions, exposing children to peers, or setting limits on child behavior. Darling and Steinberg further state that parenting practices are best conceived as operating in specific socialization domains, such as academic achievement or social competence.

Baumrind (1991) developed a widely used framework of parenting styles that consists of four parenting prototypes—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting. Authoritative parents are demand-

ing, responsive, supportive rather than punitive, assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive (Baumrind, 1991). They tend to use inductive reasoning with their children. They also want their children to be assertive, responsible, self-regulated, and cooperative. Authoritarian parents are demanding, directive, and nonresponsive. They expect their children to be obedient and to respect authority. Permissive parents are more responsive than they are demanding and they do not have a high expectation for mature behavior. Rejecting-neglecting parents are neither demanding nor responsive to their children. In contrast to the other parenting styles, authoritative parenting has been shown to be the most conducive to positive child development (Baumrind, 1991; Burleson and Kunkel, 1996; Kuczynski and Kochanska, 1995).

Children's Social Competence

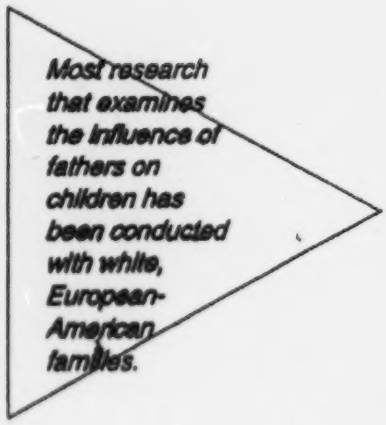
Some definitions of social competence emphasize specific aspects of social interaction such as assertion and cooperation (Gresham and Elliott, 1990), while other definitions emphasize the child's self-concept (Harter, 1982). Dodge (1985) indicated that the two features which all definitions share are a child's response to environmental stimuli and social effectiveness.

Figure 4
Sample Children's Social Competence and Academic Achievement Indicators

Social Competence and Academic Achievement: Actively engages with the children and others in developing and enhancing children's social competence and academic achievement.

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Is accepting of children Is supportive of children Listens attentively to children when they talk Is responsive to children Teaches children about the dangers of substance abuse Expresses interest in children's school work Praises children for their achievements	Parent, child.
Makes at least a minimal effort to learn about child development parenting	Parent.
Shares with the mother, and where necessary, assumes full responsibility to meet the children's health, educational, social, physical, and psychological needs.	Parent, pediatrician, teacher.

Note: The 9 indicators in this list were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.


Most research that examines the influence of fathers on children has been conducted with white, European-American families.

A number of studies have addressed the linkage between fathers' parenting style and children's social competence. Fathers who have authoritarian parenting styles appear to have children who display more externalizing behavior (Hart, DeWolf, Wozniak, and Burts, 1992; Parke, Cassidy, Burks, Carson, and Boyum, 1992). For example, a recent study indicates that fathers' negative effect during a physical play task was found to be significantly and negatively related to boys' social competence as assessed by teachers in kindergarten and first grade and by peers in kindergarten (Isley, O'Neil, Clatfelter, and Parke, 1999). MacDonald and Parke (1984) found that fathers who were more direct during play sessions had preschool-age children, particularly sons, who were less popular with peers.

Most research that examines the influence of fathers on children has been conducted with white, European-American families. However, a few studies do focus on nonwhite fathers' impact on their children. In a recent study of 73 Head Start children, Fagan (2000) found a significant and positive association between Puerto Rican fathers' self-reports of responsiveness to children and teachers' ratings of child social competence. Moreover, the association between father responsiveness and child social competence was significant even after statistically controlling for maternal parenting styles, amount of paternal involvement with the child, and child gender. Deater-Deckard et al. (1996) examined the relationship between fathers' use of physical punishment and levels of externalizing and aggressive behavior for European-American children and African-American children. The findings of this study revealed that there was a significantly greater association between fathers' use of physical punishment and higher levels of externalizing and aggressive behavior for Europea -American children than for African-American children.

As for parental practices, parents play an important role in facilitating peer contacts, particularly during the early childhood years (Hart, Olsen, Robinson, and Mandleco, 1997; Ladd and Hart, 1992). They design and mediate the social settings in which children develop their peer competencies (for example, selection of early childhood programs). Lewis (1997) has observed that fathers make themselves salient to their young children in public places, such as parks, playgrounds, and stores. Amato (1989) found that father-child interaction was greater in recreational settings like parks than in restaurants or shopping centers. Fathers also have been shown to be more interactive than mothers with their young children in parks (Burns, Mitchell, and Obradovich, 1989).

An important facet of fathers' contributions to child social competence occurs through men's involvement in play interaction with children. Across race, ethnicity, and social class, fathers spend more of their total time with children engaging in play activities than do mothers (Hossain and Roopnarine, 1994; Lamb, 1986; Parke, 1996). Especially when children are young, fathers and mothers appear to have different playing styles (Lamb, 1997). Fathers are more likely than are mothers to engage in more physical and rambunctious play, such as rough-and-tumble games. This pattern of

play has been reported in African-American, Latino, and European-American fathers. In contrast, mothers tend to engage infants with objects, as well as to read to and talk with children. Parke (1996) asserts that children benefit from both maternal and paternal styles of parental play and interaction because they experience different types of stimulation. Father-child interaction during play provides an arena for emotional and physical interaction. Through play fathers are able to invite the child to talk about problems, share their perspectives on issues, and engage in positive problem solving with their children. Parke (1996) suggests that mothers, especially during the first three years of life, play the critical caregiving role of monitoring the child's time and play, setting limits, and organizing the child's environment.

During children's middle childhood, fathers and children may engage in activities such as organized sports and may continue to engage in more physical play and verbal joking than do mothers (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). As children enter adolescence, differences in parent-child playful activities persist. For example, Larson and Richards (1994) report that fathers spend the majority of time with their adolescents in active recreation, watching television, or resting, while mothers spend more time doing housework, personal care, and socializing with adolescents.

Academic Achievement

Fathers play an important role in facilitating children's school achievement. There are many ways in which fathers could have a positive impact on children's academic abilities, including fostering their intellectual and language development, attending school functions, making time for and helping children to do homework, expressing interest in the child's schoolwork, reading to young children, and so forth. An increasing number of studies reveal that fathers have a significant influence on their child's intellectual development. For example, research shows that paternal stimulation of infants seems to be important for the development of boys' mastery motivation (Yarrow, MacTurk, Vietze, McCarthy, Klein, and McQuiston, 1984). Clarke-Stewart (1978) found that the intellectual skill of 15- to 30-month-olds was significantly related to fathers' engagement in play, positive ratings of children, the amount they interacted, and their aspirations for the child's independence.

Father-Child Communication. Research on parent-child interaction has shown that there are special characteristics of fathers' and mothers' child-directed speech. (For a review, see Lewis, 1997.) The earliest studies found that the structural characteristics of fathers' language (mean length of utterance, type-token-ratio, mean number of verbs per utterances, and proportion of sentence types) were similar to those used by mothers. (See Barton and Tomasello, 1994, for a review.)

Studies that have focused on the pragmatic or conversational aspects of parent-child communication have documented differences in the ways that fathers and mothers communicate with their children.

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ways that fathers and mothers communicate with their children. One of the most robust findings is that fathers' speech to their children is more linguistically and cognitively demanding (Bernstein, 1988; Tomasello, Conti-Ramsden, and Ewert, 1990). Fathers allow fewer speaker turns than do mothers; respond less to children's utterances; are less adept at understanding their children; ask for fewer clarifications; and are less inclined to accept violations of discourse rules. In their vocabulary choices, fathers appear to be less attuned to the children's linguistic level than mothers. The lexicon used by the fathers is not more diverse but the types of words used are different. Based on differences seen across mothers' and fathers' child-directed speech, Gleason (1975) postulated that the father's role is to serve as a "bridge" between the closely child-tuned communicative environment nurtured by mothers and that of the outside world in which the child will need his or her communication skills to successfully interact with less familiar, and potentially less accommodating, peers and adults such as those found in schools.

A small number of studies have focused on the relationship between the communication skills of fathers and children. Examination of father-child language interaction among Head Start families suggests robust relationship between fathers' conversational skills and children's conversational and linguistic abilities (Fagan and Iglesias, 2000). Specifically, the fathers' poor conversational skills (for example, being an unequal conversational partner) had a negative effect on their children's linguistic and conversational abilities. The overall picture that emerges is one in which fathers who dominate the conversation are likely to have children with the poorest conversational and linguistic skills.

A positive association has been found between high-level participation in a father involvement project and children's mathematics readiness change scores.

Father Involvement in Academics. There is a growing body of literature examining the impact of paternal involvement in children's schooling and academic achievement. Research on parents' roles in children's cognitive development has demonstrated the significance of parent-child interaction to improve children's school performance. In areas such as children's early reading, for example, Gadsden and Bowman (1999) suggest that fathers' participation in literate activities, the barriers they face as a result of low literacy, and their perceptions of the role they can play in their children's literacy development may affect whether and how well children are prepared for school. Such factors also may influence the direct and subtle messages that fathers convey to their children about the value, achievability, and power associated not only with literacy but also with schooling and knowledge. Although mother's education historically has been used as the primary predictor of children's achievement, educational research increasingly is examining father-child interaction on children's early learning within and outside of school, particularly among low-income fathers (Edwards, 1995; Gadsden, Brooks, and Jackson, 1997; also see recent efforts at Reading Is Fundamental in the U. S. Department of Education). What these and other studies suggest is that a father's ability to support his child's learning affects the child's engagement with books and schooling. As is true for mothers,

however, fathers who have limited schooling and reading and writing abilities are constrained in their attempts to participate in many school-related activities requiring high levels of literacy.

However, even when fathers have limited schooling, their involvement in children's schools and school lives is a powerful predictor of children's academic achievement. Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997) found that fathers from two-parent families who are moderately or highly involved in school are significantly more likely to have children who receive mostly high marks, enjoy school, and never repeat a grade. Nonresidential fathers' involvement in school also predicts the same outcome measures for children (Nord, Brimhall, and West, 1997). In their study of 11- to 14-year-old children, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that fathers who participate in school activities have children with a higher degree of self-perceived academic competence and greater self-regulation. Father involvement in intellectual and cultural activities at home was also related to children's perceived academic competence (Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994). In a recent study of pre-kindergarten Head Start children, a positive association was found between high-level participation in a father involvement project and children's mathematics readiness change scores (Fagan and Iglesias, 1999).

Research that examines the extent to which fathers are involved with their child's school, such as the recent national representative study undertaken by Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997) and the Head Start study by Gary, Beatty, and Weaver (1987), has generally shown that fathers are less involved than mothers in all types of school activities, including volunteering and attending class events, parent-teacher conferences, and general school meetings. Fathers with less than a high school education were also much less likely to be involved in their child's school than fathers with higher levels of education (Nord, Brimhall, and West, 1997). While nonresidential fathers were found to be substantially less involved with the child's school than residential fathers, Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997) indicated that the involvement of nonresidential fathers was in no way trivial. As children move into adolescence, fathers and mothers play a less dominant, although not unimportant, role in their children's education (Hosley and Montemayor, 1997).

Conclusion

While there is much work exploring the influences of fathers on their children's social competence and academic achievement, there are also some significant gaps in this body of research. Researchers have given insufficient attention to the ways in which different groups of fathers become involved in their children's social and academic development. There is also little research on the impact that father involvement programs and interventions have on children's outcomes. It is our hope that the FIF will stimulate new research and evaluation in these areas.

Researchers have given insufficient attention to the ways in which different groups of fathers become involved in their children's social and academic development.

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The Cooperative Parenting Indicator Category

Although fatherhood specialists typically agree that children need the support and nurturing of their fathers, few studies in the field have addressed the ways that fathers and mothers share in the responsibilities and tasks of childrearing; what the nature of this process is; how parents representing different family forms approach and achieve success; or what the cultural issues are that promote or hinder the processes of shared responsibility in parenting. Rather, the field has focused on individual fathers' relationships with their children and the definitions of individual father caring and parenting. Despite the practical advantages of creating and sustaining positive, cooperative parenting relationships and the increasing potential of cooperative parenting for responsible fatherhood, to date there is no systematic body of work—in research, programs, or policy—that addresses issues of cooperative parenting as it relates to father involvement and its implications for child well-being.

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Unlike other categories in this framework, cooperative parenting indicators do not focus primarily on changes in the one-on-one relationships between fathers and their children. Instead, this category is designed to chart changes in the ability of fathers to work along with mothers (in terms of both cooperative and uncooperative behaviors) in order to enhance children's well-being. Parents' ability to work with each other depends on a process of establishing cooperation, collaboration, and shared expectations of the responsibilities caregivers have of one another.

A sample listing of cooperative parenting indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and source of data can be found in Figure 5.

Cooperative Parenting

Cooperative parenting is relevant to families regardless of the marital status of the parents, the father's residential status, or the circumstances of a child's birth. Clearly, the issues of cooperative parenting depend on family type. For example, cooperative parenting among divorced parents involves

renegotiating shared parental roles. Cooperative parenting is used also to describe a range of other parenting relationships as well, including same-sex parenting and childcare shared by a parent and a grandparent or a parent and other caregivers. Since the mid-1990s, attention to cooperative parenting has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners working with unmarried fathers and mothers (Philadelphia Children's Network, 1996). As a result, new terms such as team parenting have emerged, intended to highlight the complexities that some young, low-income, never-married fathers and mothers face in sharing decision-making and supporting their children.

Defining Cooperative Parenting. Researchers have used different approaches to define cooperative parenting. Several have focused on the support that one parent gives to the other when she or he is advancing a parenting goal (Gable, Belsky, and Crnic, 1995). Other researchers have concentrated on interparental agreement (Vaughn, Block, and Block, 1988) or child-related disputes between parents (Jouriles et al., 1991). Still others have referred to a parenting alliance, defined as the ability of a parent to acknowledge, respect, and value the parenting roles and tasks of the partner (Cohen and Weissman, 1984). Using the Cohen and Weissman definition, McBride and Ranes (1998) provided the following operational definition of parenting alliance: (1) each parent has an investment in the child; (2) each parent values the importance of the other parent in fostering the child's growth and development; (3) each parent respects and values the judgements of the other parent; and (4) parents maintain an ongoing communication with one another around the needs of the child.

Figure 5
Sample Cooperative Parenting Indicators

Cooperative Parenting: Father, mother, and other caregivers establish and conscientiously work to maintain a supportive, cooperative, interdependent relationship aimed at optimal child development.

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Maintains mature and respectful relationships with others in the childrearing network	Father, mother, child report. Surveys, in-depth interviews.
Resolves differences with others in the childrearing network through effective problem solving measures	
Discusses and negotiates childrearing goals with others in the childrearing network	

Note: The 3 indicators in this list were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.

Building the Framework. There are considerable data suggesting that children benefit from the engagement of both fathers and mothers, and that children are positively affected when their parents achieve mutual understandings on their behalf. But the ability of parents to achieve a shared understanding of parenting depends on a number of factors, including the history and quality of their relationship, their beliefs about parental roles and responsibilities, and their personal characteristics. Arendell (1995) notes that an understanding of how shared parenting arrangements are negotiated is more speculative than grounded in empirical evidence. However, even if such data were available, it would be necessary to know how parents define their individual roles in the care, planning, and support of children; how parenting is defined within families; and how parents work out the complexities of their relationships, particularly in nonmarital, nonresidential relationships. In addition, questions related to cultural practices, class and ethnic variations, differences by virtue of family forms, and the relationship between increased fathering efforts and effective cooperative parenting agreements and practices would need to be examined.

To construct a framework for cooperative parenting in relation to fathers, we can draw from the work on paternal involvement. In this body of research, three family formulations have received attention: (1) married or co-residing fathers in two-parent families; (2) separated or divorced fathers who live apart from the mothers of their children; and (3) unwed young fathers who usually do not share a household with their offspring but who may continue to reside with a parent, parents, or other family members. Father participation varies both within and across these different family structures and forms. Although the three predominant family arrangements present men with somewhat different parenting issues and challenges, common patterns prevail across family forms—that is, the criteria for assessing cooperative parenting are very similar across all family types. For example, interparental agreement is important for married, separated, divorced, or never married parents. Some suggest that these similarities have to do with sociocultural definitions and expectations of gender identities, parenting assignments, and definitions of masculinity (Arendell, 1996).

The ability of parents to achieve a shared understanding of parenting depends on a number of factors, including the history and quality of their relationship, their beliefs about parental roles and responsibilities, and their personal characteristics.

Fathers' Cooperative Parenting in Married and Two-Parent Co-Residential Families. Among married and two-parent cohabiting couples, the term cooperative parenting, or shared parenting, typically refers to relationships in which fathers' participation in childrearing is more or less equal to mothers'. Such involvement still appears to be rare, despite attention given to the "new father" in recent years. Historically, caring for others, including children, has been a gendered activity, defined as women's work and done predominately by women (Cowan and Cowan, 1988; Tiedje and Darling-Fisher, 1993). Although fathers in cohabiting couples appear to be more involved in their children's upbringing than were their own fathers (Cowan and Cowan, 1998), fathers continue to be more involved with activities outside the home, and mothers carry primary responsibility

for childcare and childrearing, regardless of their employment status. In other words, cooperative parenting relationships often involve complex issues related to the conventional gendered division of labor.

Fathering and Cooperative Parenting Post-Divorce. Divorced parents offer a different context than either married or never-married parents. After a divorce, the establishment of a cooperative parenting relationship between parents may be influenced by the nonresidence of the noncustodial parent, the personal willingness and ability of parents to establish a cooperative parenting relationship, and feelings and emotions engendered during marital dissolution. For example, divorcing adults often are at-risk for psychological and physical problems—such as depression, anger, and impulsive behavior—that may interfere with paternal involvement and parenting. Long-term adjustment is related to several factors, including the degree of attachment to a spouse and conflict with a former spouse.

The ability of parents to construct both a plan for cooperative parenting activities and mutually respectful relationships does serve as a critical mediating factor for child well-being. If parents are not able to co-plan and co-parent, fundamental parent-child activities may be compromised. For example, frequent visitation becomes problematic if the parental relationship is conflict-ridden, and fathers may reduce the frequency of visitation and the amount of child support in order to reduce the opportunity for conflict with the former spouse (Arendell, 1994). In fact, the character of a father's relationship with his former partner is the most salient factor in determining the frequency of visitation.

Successful cooperative parenting depends on planning—that is, shared planning for and identification of each other's independent and shared roles, as well as individual planning by each parent to ensure that their social contract is implemented effectively.

Several factors contribute to the ability of fathers to co-parent after divorce:

1. Parents who attempt to share parenting post-divorce need resources, both financial and human, to help carry out the familial and childrearing tasks formerly shared by two cohabiting adults. Poor families often have fewer resources or social networks, which are also less able to absorb the additional demands of divorced parents. As Donnelly and Finkelhor (1993) suggest, shared parenting seems to require certain conditions and is not suitable for all divorced parents.
2. Parents must be motivated both to handle the logistics and planning required in cooperative parenting and to work to relate to each other in cooperative and collaborative fashions, particularly around issues such as childcare, which prior to divorce may have been taken for granted.
3. Third, successful cooperative parenting depends on planning—that is, shared planning for and identification of each other's independent and shared roles, as well as individual planning by each parent to ensure that their social contract is implemented effectively. In addition, open and ongoing communication between parents is

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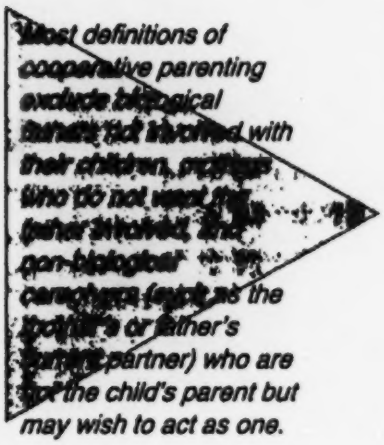
Most definitions of cooperative parenting exclude biological fathers who do not want to be involved with their children, mothers who do not want the father involved, and non-biological caregivers (such as a mother's or father's current partner) who are not the child's parent but may wish to act as one.

essential. In an ethnographic study by Arendell, for example the fathers (with two exceptions) indicated that their parenting involvement was greater in the cooperative parenting relationship than it had been while they were married, suggesting that the cooperative parenting relationship required significantly more discussion and communication with the former spouse than had prevailed during the marriage.

Cooperative Parenting and Young, Unwed Fathers. Although there has been considerable focus on young fathers—in the form of policy analyses, demonstration projects, and research—there is currently little clarity in the field about what is meant by cooperative parenting. Several variants of the concept of cooperative parenting have emerged over the past five years. One that is cited consistently in the discussions about low-income, never-married fathers or in work on so-called "fragile families" is the concept of "team parenting," which is intended to denote the special circumstances faced by this population of fathers and families. For unmarried couples, the task of cooperative parenting (or team parenting) involves defining parental roles, obligations, and responsibilities outside the legal protection and culturally defined role expectations that marriage provides. Cooperative parenting is a voluntary act in which the young, unmarried parent chooses to participate.

Most definitions of cooperative parenting exclude biological fathers who do not acknowledge paternity or who do not want to be involved with their children, mothers who do not want the father involved, and non-biological caregivers (such as a mother's or father's current partner) who are not the child's parent but may wish to act as one. While each of these groups is important to a full discussion of unmarried cooperative parenting couples, the unique challenges and circumstances faced by each differ markedly from unmarried biological parents who voluntarily have committed to cooperative parenting.

Unlike married or divorced fathers, young unwed fathers' participation in parenting or cooperative parenting may depend on the fathers' presence at birth and paternity declaration; frequency of access and contact; cohabitation with the mother and the status of his relationship with her; the ability of the young father to provide financial support; and social and cultural expectations around fathers' parental rights. Many unmarried parents may need support in negotiating the processes by which they learn to work together for the benefit of their children. A barrier to cooperative parenting among never-married, noncustodial fathers is maternal (or maternal grandparent) gatekeeping, which occurs if and when mothers limit father involvement and contact with the child. Gatekeeping involves determining the circumstances for the noncustodial parent's involvement (i.e., where the visits may take place and what may happen on those visits). Anger or conflict may cause a mother to restrict the amount and type of father involvement. Although the amount and effects of the custodial parent's

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gatekeeping have not been well-documented in two-parent families, anecdotal evidence of gatekeeping in divorced families has been consistently reported. What is not known is the frequency with which such gatekeeping occurs, the nature of the gatekeeping, or the extent to which gatekeeping affects children's development either positively or negatively. Obvious issues that merit examination are those surrounding self-esteem, children's perceptions of the gatekeeping (which may be construed as a type of parental conflict), and other psychological factors for the child (such as depression).

Conclusion

The effects of father involvement on the family are both profound and varied, and cooperative parenting greatly influences—and is influenced by—father involvement and behavior toward children. The most fundamental outcomes of cooperative parenting and father presence are their impact on child development. Unfortunately, considerably more work is needed in this area of family relationships. First, as suggested above, marital quality has been more extensively studied than has the relationship of unwed parents. Second, research on divorced parents lacks a critical discussion of the impact on children's well-being of the involvement of noncustodial versus custodial fathers or fathers in marital relationships.

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The Fathers' Healthy Living Indicator Category

This category focuses on fathers' healthy living variables that contribute to their ability to care for, be committed to, and foster the well-being and positive development of children. The emphasis is specifically on adolescent fathering, substance abuse, family violence, emotional and physical health, and antisocial behavior. Adolescent and young adult fathering are included as one of the healthy living variables because of the multiple risks associated with early childbearing.

In our discussion of each healthy living variable, we draw on literature showing how such variables become barriers to parenting and their consequences for children. We also cite literature demonstrating how a father's disconnection from his children adversely affects his own well-being. Practitioners are keenly aware of the strong connection between fathers' well-being and the capacity of fathers to be active participants in their children's lives. However, practitioners seldom have a positive impact on fathers' abilities to care for their children when the father's own health and well-being are not being considered.

Practitioners are keenly aware of the strong connection between fathers' well-being and the capacity of fathers to be active participants in their children's lives.

In focusing on healthy living, we urge users of the FIF to consider seriously the relationships between healthy living and the educational and literacy levels of fathers. Because of the scope of issues faced by the fathers they serve, practitioners in father- and family-focused programs often do not attend to these relationhips. However, limited education and low levels of literacy among adolescent and adult fathers alike are critical barriers to utilizing health-related information; seeking adequate health care; obtaining and sustaining employment; negotiating with institutions and advocating for themselves, their children, and families; participating in positive activities within their communities; and ensuring the safety and welfare of their children and families (Gadsden, Brooks, and Jackson, 1997). For example, many low-income fathers report that their levels of education and literacy serve as a debilitating factor not only in their relationship with their children but also in their ability to ensure their own economic well-being as well as that of their children and families. However, although these

problems have the most severe consequences for low-income fathers—particularly low-income, minority fathers—they also may restrict the social services and health care access of fathers from a range of ethnic groups and social classes.

A sample listing of healthy living indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and source data can be found in Figure 6.

Adolescent and Young Adult Fathering

Births to unmarried mothers increased from 666,000 in 1980 to 1,260,000 in 1996. Of these births, 272,000 were to adolescent mothers in 1980, and 383,000 were to adolescent mothers in 1996, an increase of 41 percent (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1999). Not a great deal is known about the young men who father these children and, consequently, the lack of longitudinal research has left considerable gaps in knowledge about the life course of these fathers and their families. While the media tends to portray these young men as uninvolved with their children, several studies have suggested that young fathers' involvement may be greater than

Figure 6
Sample Fathers' Healthy Living Indicators

Fathers' Healthy Living: Attends to one's health and well-being in order to provide a positive role model (i.e., teaching personal ethics as well as social norms to help the child grow and become a productive member of society).

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Decrease in child abuse and neglect perpetrated by fathers and other men Improvement in fathers' effective communication of needs and wants Improvement in coping with stressors without relying on substances Increasing recognition that personal use of substances interferes with paternal responsibilities Improvement in resolving conflicts with related adults without violence Attends to one's emotional and psychological challenges by seeking out appropriate resources Improvement in resolving conflicts with unrelated adults without violence	Father, mother, child reports. Surveys, in-depth interviews.
Number of incidents of domestic violence witnessed by child	Father, mother, child report. DV programs. Surveys, interviews, observations, videotape coding.
Number of fathers who avoid use and possession of substances that could lead to legal interventions	Surveys.

Note: The 9 indicators in this list were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.

Younger fathers are likely to have less life experience, personal discipline, and financial and educational resources than older fathers and are more likely to engage in behaviors that limit their opportunities to be involved parents.

once believed (Stier and Tienda, 1993). Clearly, young, unwed, nonresidential fathers are lower on all dimensions of involvement than older, coresiding fathers (Seltzer, 1991). More recently, Aquilino (1994) found that young adults raised in nonintact families reported identical levels of involvement and relationship quality with their fathers regardless of whether the parents separated, divorced, or never lived together.

There are several critical issues to examine in relation to adolescent and young adult fathers—the effect of early childbearing on young males, the quality of their parenting, and the characteristics of young males who are likely to become fathers. Premature fatherhood is associated with a variety of negative consequences for young males:

- **Lower Wages.** Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Lerman (1993) found that young men who reported being unwed fathers in 1984 worked fewer hours and earned $5,000 to $9,000 less per year in 1987 than their counterparts who were either unmarried without children, married without children, or married with children. The effect of early fatherhood on earnings may be due to the educational attainment of these men. Nock (1998) found that teenaged fathers achieved significantly lower educational levels than men who became fathers later in life. The consequences of early fatherhood on earnings may be due also to the likelihood that young men who become fathers are less likely to work year-round than older men (Nock, 1998).
- **Immaturity.** Nakashima and Camp (1984) found that adolescent fathers functioned at a less mature level of ego development than adult fathers. Rhoden and Robinson (1997) suggested that the psycho-social crises of intimacy and generativity, which are usually associated with young adulthood and middle adulthood, are prematurely woven into the challenges of forming an identity among adolescent fathers. Teenaged fathers express concerns about how their responsibilities as parents interfere with their freedom to spend time with their friends (Marsiglio, 1988). Using qualitative research methods, Furstenberg (1995) found that young fathers reported being ill-prepared to make sacrifices for their children.
- **Antisocial Behavior.** Fifty-one percent of men who were partners of pregnant adolescents reported a history of involvement with the police prior to the pregnancy, and many of the offenses were serious in nature (Elster, Lamb, Peters, Kahn, and Tavare, 1987). Teenaged fathers are also more likely to be members of gangs (Thornberry, Smith, and Howard, 1997). Findings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth indicate that young unwed fathers (aged 14 to 21 years) used more hard drugs and engaged in more criminal behavior than young men without children or married young men with children (Lerman, 1993). Christmon and Luckey (1994) found that young fathers under age 23 were more likely to abuse cocaine, but less likely to abuse alcohol, than young men who were

not fathers. The occurrence of adolescent males' antisocial behavior problems during or prior to pregnancy is related to greater parenting and cooperative parenting problems during the transition to parenthood (Florsheim, Moore, Zollinger, MacDonald, and Sumida, 1999).

Taken together, the literature suggests that the personal development of young fathers shapes how they view their paternal roles and their interactions with children. Younger fathers are likely to have less life experience, personal discipline, and financial and educational resources than older fathers and are more likely to engage in behaviors that limit their opportunities to be involved parents. In a study of children born to teenaged mothers in Baltimore, Furstenberg (1995) reported that the "intentions of fathers far outstrip their ability to make good on their goal of becoming involved caretakers" (p. 194).

We were unable to find any empirical studies of the quality of adolescent fathers' interactions with their children. The negative effects on offspring of teenaged childbearing have been widely documented (for a review, see Marsiglio and Cohan, 1997). However, researchers have not yet examined child outcomes in relation to both the young mother's age and the young father's age. Such research is needed as a means of determining whether the age of the father moderates the effect of the mother's age on the child.

Substance Abuse

Another challenge to the well-being of adolescent and young adult fathers is alcohol and substance abuse. Data from the 1989 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth indicate a one-year prevalence rate of alcohol abuse and dependence of 13.95 percent for adults ages 24 to 31 years (Harford and Grant, 1994). Rates of abuse and dependence were greater for men than for women and for whites compared to blacks and Hispanics. Findings from the National Longitudinal Alcohol and Epidemiological Survey of youth and adults indicate a prevalence rate of lifetime drug use at 15.6 percent, with 4.9 percent of the respondents reporting drug use during the past 12 months (Grant, 1996). These data also indicate that men are significantly more likely to use drugs than women, although the rates of dependence among women are approaching the rates of men among youth aged 18 to 24 years.

Most research on the effects of paternal substance abuse has focused on alcohol abuse. Surprisingly, few studies have examined the parenting practices and competencies of fathers who abuse substances.

Most research on the effects of paternal substance abuse on children has focused on alcohol abuse. A father's problem drinking is associated with lower levels of paternal involvement with children (Phares, 1997), stress in family life (Farrell, Barnes, and Banerjee, 1995), and dysfunctional family practices (Haughland and Havik, 1998). Families are more likely to use detrimental disciplinary practices when fathers abuse alcohol (Tarter, Blackson, Martin, and Loeber, 1993). Other studies suggest that fathers who have alcohol problems were rated by their adult sons as being less

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caring and protective than fathers without such problems (Rutherford, Cacciola, Alterman, McKay, and Cook, 1997). Surprisingly, few studies have examined the parenting practices and competencies of fathers who abuse substances.

The research literature has documented various negative psychosocial outcomes for offspring when fathers abuse alcohol and other substances. Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) note that one of the many possible antecedents of adolescent drug use is a family history of alcoholism and parental use of illegal drugs. The volume of alcohol consumed by offspring depends on both the volume of and problems associated with fathers' use (Harburg, Gleiberman, DiFranceisco, and Schork, 1990). In an extensive review of the literature of children of alcoholic fathers, Phares (1997) suggested that the children of alcoholic fathers are at increased risk for a range of psychosocial problems other than substance abuse, including delinquency and conduct problems, depression and anxiety, hyperactivity, and personality problems. For example, fathers' substance abuse is associated with a lifetime history of suicidal behavior (Pfeffer, Normandin, and Kakuma, 1998). However, poor academic functioning has not been paired with fathers' alcoholism (Murphy, O'Farrell, Floyd, and Connors, 1991).

Research is needed to determine the extent to which paternal incarceration and antisocial behavior predict fathers' involvement with children above and beyond the effects of education, unemployment, and noncustodial parenting.

Incarceration and Antisocial Behavior

Not much is known about the impact of antisocial behavior and incarceration on fathers and their children. The number of fathers currently incarcerated is not known, as reports of the actual number of men in prison at any given time do not reflect the total number of fathers in prison. There are currently 1.7 million people incarcerated in the United States and 3.8 million more on parole or probation (CWLA, 1999). The number of fathers who have been incarcerated is substantial and likely exceeds the frequently cited number of 500,000 fathers (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). It is safe to assume that the capacity of fathers to care for and stay connected with their children is greatly affected by their involvement in criminal activities, particularly when they are incarcerated for such behaviors.

There is a strong association between incarceration and a range of other psycho-social variables, including low levels of educational achievement, unemployment, and noncustodial parenting. Incarcerated men typically have limited education and employment skills, and 90 percent had incomes below $25,000 at the time of their arrest (CWLA, 1999). Each of these psycho-social variables is also linked to paternal involvement. Research is needed to determine the extent to which paternal incarceration and antisocial behavior predict fathers' involvement with children above and beyond the effects of education, unemployment, and noncustodial parenting.

The research literature has shown a connection between paternal antisocial behavior and child conduct problems. When legal definitions of

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antisocial behavior have been used, the link between parental criminality and childhood delinquency has been found independent of family socioeconomic status, neighborhood, and intellectual functioning (Glueck and Glueck, 1968; McCord, 1979; Osborn and West, 1979). Recent findings suggest that children of offenders are six times more likely than their peers to be incarcerated (Jacobs, 1995). However, paternal antisocial behavior is not the only factor that is associated with child conduct problems. In a meta-analysis of 29 studies, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) found that, in 22 of those studies, lack of parental involvement was significantly associated with severe conduct disorder in children. Lack of father involvement had a stronger influence on children's antisocial behavior than lack of mother involvement. Other factors also contribute to the development of conduct problems in children, including parental aggression, noncontingent discipline, poor parental health, and deviant peers (Loeber, 1990).

Family Violence

The well-being of fathers and their families is closely tied to a father's ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts without violence. Recent national data have shown that 27 to 30 percent of children reported that their parents used corporal punishment in the last year; .9 percent reported a serious incident of physical abuse (Finkelhor and Dzinba-Leatherman, 1994). There are conflicting reports about the extent to which fathers and mothers abuse their children—with some research showing that mothers are more likely to do so (Wollner and Gelles, 1993) and other research showing that fathers are the more likely perpetrators (Malkin and Lamb, 1994). Whatever the case may be, maltreatment of children and domestic violence have far-reaching negative effects on those children, including putting children at-risk for behavioral dysfunction. Results from a longitudinal study of physically abused and neglected children indicate that maltreatment and poor family climate increase the risk of behavior problems (Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, Rupert, Egolf, and Lutz, 1995).

The well-being of fathers and their families is closely tied to fathers' ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts without violence.

The child abuse literature tends to focus on the consequences of abuse for children as perpetrated by any adult. As a result, we were unable to locate research findings on the different impacts of father versus mother abuse or the impact of having a father as well as a mother abuse the child. Family violence may also involve acts of violence between adults or between siblings in a family, which may or may not be witnessed by children. There are currently no national prevalence studies of children witnessing violence among adults in the family (Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, Atkins, and Marcus, 1997). However, in a five-city study of child exposure to substantiated cases of adult female assaults, Fantuzzo et al. (1997) found that children were disproportionately present in households with domestic violence. Moreover, young children aged zero to five years were more likely to witness acts of domestic violence than older children.

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What is the impact on children of witnessing domestic violence among adults? Children in families where domestic violence occurs worry more about the vulnerability of their mothers, brothers, and sisters than do children in nonviolent families (Graham-Bermann, 1996). Sternberg, Lamb, Greenbaum, Dawud, Cortes, and Lorey (1994) found that children of violent adults were more likely to have negative perceptions of the abusive parent than were children in a comparison group. Child outcomes also tend to be negative: Living in a violent home often results in elevated levels of psychological symptoms when compared with children living in nonviolent homes (McCloskey, Southwick, Fernandez, and Locke, 1995).

Mental and Physical Health

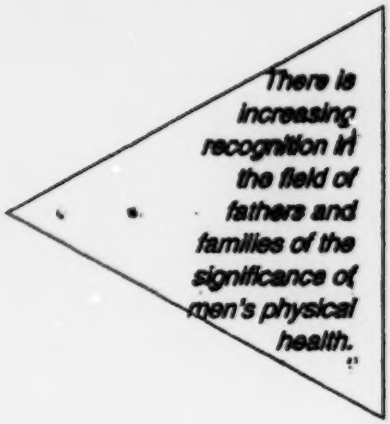
Mental Health. Phares (1997) has written extensively about fathers' mental health. Despite the existence of a number of studies on this subject, very little is known about the fathering behaviors of men with the most severe mental health problems, such as schizophrenia. For example, while some studies have revealed that fathers with schizophrenia are unlikely to participate in the parenting of their children (Watt, 1986), other studies have shown a substantial number of such fathers who reside with and participate in their child's care (Coverdale, Schotte, Ruiz, Phares, and Bayer, 1994). One study of child perceptions of their schizophrenic fathers revealed lower levels of paternal acceptance and involvement in comparison to fathers without mental health problems (El-Guebaly et al., 1978).

The amount of research on the effects of depression on fathers is almost negligible in comparison to that of mothers. There is a vast literature on the effects of depression on mothers' ability to care for and interact with their children. The studies comprising this literature have generally shown that depression is associated with lower levels of maternal responsiveness, noncontingent responses, and lower sensitivity to children. However, depression does have its effects on the father-child relationship as well. Phares (1997) reviewed the literature on the effects of paternal depression on children and found that 12 of the 17 studies that investigated this relationship reported significant associations between fathers' depression and child maladjustment.

The amount of research on the effects of depression on fathers is almost negligible in comparison to that of mothers.

Physical Health. There is increasing recognition in the field of fathers and families of the significance of men's physical health. Current trend data indicate that, on average, men die six years earlier than women. Research indicates that there are no standards for men's health, while there are for women's health (Bartlett, 2000). As a result, Bartlett recommends setting the following standards for men's health: high blood pressure screening, smoking cessation counseling, prostate screening, suicide risk detection, risk reduction for young men, AIDS prevention, workplace safety, utilization of medical services, prenatal class involvement, and birth participation.

This apparent lack of focus on men's health has also been recognized by government policymakers. For example, former U.S. Secretary for Health and Human Services Donna Shalala highlighted the problem of men not attending to their health needs in a recent health agenda document, *Healthy People 2010.* Some of these patterns, including the avoidance of health care services, start in adolescence.



Conclusion

Numerous studies demonstrate how men tend to pay insufficient attention to their own well-being. Other research indicates that a father's neglect of his own mental and physical health can have substantial negative impacts on his children as well. Given this dual challenge, practitioners and policymakers face added difficulties in making a positive impact on fathers' or their children's lives. Adolescent fathers, in particular, face barriers to healthy living, in the form of low levels of income, low maturity levels, and increased potential for antisocial behavior. Those fathers who have abused substances, have been incarcerated, or have physically or mentally abused a family member increase the potential for exhibiting behaviors that negatively affect their own and their children's outcomes. To help practitioners and policymakers begin to effect positive change in these fathers' lives, researchers must expand their investigation of the effects of limited education and low literacy on healthy living and the nature and quality of fathers' interactions with their children—a step that will lead to indicators that can provide a better understanding of the impacts fathers' behaviors have and, subsequently, the most effective ways of changing those behaviors to support family well-being.

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The Material and Financial Contributions Indicator Category

Until recently, fathers were seen as the primary economic provider for both children and their mothers. As women increasingly move into the workforce, fathers do not necessarily have the primary or only role as breadwinner. Despite these changes, societal expectations are that men will be wage-earners and will contribute to their children's financial welfare. As a result, the key indicators used to represent fathers' contributions are earnings and income for fathers who reside with their children, and child support or informal support for those who do not. However, fathers contribute in a number of financial and other material ways to the support of their children.

Until recently, fathers were seen as the primary economic provider for both children and their mothers. As women move into the workforce, fathers do not necessarily have the primary or only role as breadwinner.

A sample listing of material and financial contributions indicator definitions, appropriate measures, and source data can be found in Figure 7.

Financial Contributions and Their Effects

Social scientists have examined extensively the relationship between fathers' financial contributions and child outcomes. A small number of studies have attempted to determine if fathers' income makes a unique contribution to child well-being. For example, Blau and Grossberg (1992) examined the relationship between parental income and child verbal abilities using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth on three- and four-year-old children born to mothers between the ages of 21 and 29; the sample consisted of both two-parent and single-parent families. The survey's results indicated that a father's income has a significant, positive effect on a child's verbal abilities after statistically controlling for mothers' income and maternal and paternal education. In a similar study, Hill and Duncan (1987) examined the relationship between mothers' and fathers' labor income on adult children's completed education and wages using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics; the respondents in this study were raised in two-parent families. Fathers' labor income was significantly and positively associated with sons' and daughters' measures of

completed education and wages after controlling for mothers' labor income and maternal and paternal education.

Beyond these examples, empirical research has not consistently shown a relationship between paternal income and child outcomes. For example, Rumberger (1983) found a significant and negative relationship between fathers' earnings and dropping out of high school among white female youth but not among black or Hispanic female youth. Furthermore, there was no significant relationship between fathers' earnings and dropping out among male youth.

Another body of literature has reported findings on the association between nonresident fathers' child support payments and child outcomes. In a recent meta-analysis of 63 studies, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found a significant, positive mean effect of child support payment on children's academic success, and a significant, negative mean effect of child support on children's externalizing behavior. Moreover, the effects of child support payments on children were significant after controlling for the amount of father contact, the degree to which children feel close to their fathers, and the quality of fathers' parenting.

Poverty and Nonresidency and Their Effects. Another facet of the relationship between fathers' financial contributions and child outcomes relates to the consequences of fathers earning little money or not residing with their children and paying little or no child support. Low-income fathers face a number of obstacles to earning steady, livable wages.

Figure 7
Sample Material and Financial Contributions Indicators

Material and Financial Contributions: Engages in consistent activities that provide material and financial support to the child.

Indicators	Current or Potential Source of Information
Proportion of fathers who pay any child support. Increase in the number/proportion of fathers who pay child support	CSP, SIPP, CSE.
Proportion of fathers employed	CSP, SIPP, SPD.
Degree to which fathers' increased financial contributions result in improved resources and opportunities for children	Father, mother, grandparent or other family member reports. Surveys, ethnographies.
Number of fathers entering/re-entering the labor force	CPS.

Note: The 5 indicators in this list were most frequently identified as being very important to fathers by a sample of 36 practitioners participating in one of five focus groups conducted in various parts of the United States.

According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation (1998), the proportion of young men between the ages of 25 and 34 who earned wages sufficient to lift a family of four out of poverty declined from 83 percent in the 1960s to 67 percent in the 1990s. The transformation from a manufacturing- to a service-based economy has left men who relied on low-skill jobs for income ill-prepared to work in the current marketplace (Wilson, 1996). Johnson, Levine, and Doolittle (1999) documented the struggle of men who lack sufficient monetary resources—either for themselves or their families—due to a lack of steady jobs that pay living wages in their community.

In a review of research on the effects of poverty on children, Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) concluded that children who live in extreme poverty or who are poor for multiple years tend to experience the worst outcomes. Poor children of all ages are likely to have lower cognitive abilities even after controlling for maternal education (Smith, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov, 1997). However, long-term poverty appears to have a greater impact on cognitive abilities during early and middle childhood than during adolescence (Guo, 1998). In contrast, cumulative poverty has a greater impact on academic achievement during adolescence than during a child's earlier years (Guo, 1998).

Data from the Current Population Survey and other sources indicate that nonresident fathers could be more helpful in lifting their children out of poverty (Scoon-Rogers, 1999). Nearly 3 of every 10 children live with only one parent; in 85 percent of the cases, that parent is the mother. The poverty rate for families with one absent parent was 30.4 percent in 1995—over twice the poverty rate for two-parent families. Could child support help reduce the high poverty rate among such families? The answer is, undoubtedly, yes. In 1995, 42 percent of custodial parents had no child support orders awarded. Of those who had child support orders, only 70 percent received at least a portion of what was owed, and only an average of 63 percent of the total owed was paid. The gap in child support payments amounted to $10 billion in 1995.

Financial contributions are possible only if a father has sufficient income to pay reasonable amounts of child support. To the extent that fathers lack this income, employment and training programs may be needed to improve their financial capacity.

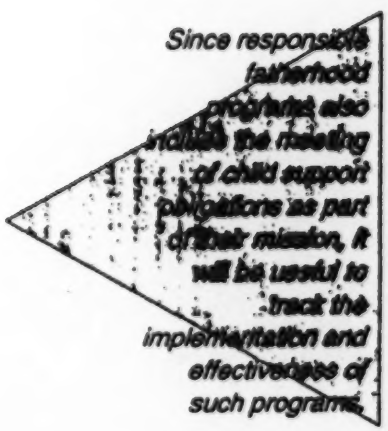
However, financial contributions are possible only if a father has sufficient income and earnings to pay reasonable amounts of child support. To the extent that fathers lack this income, employment and training programs may be needed to improve their financial capacity. Indeed, Welfare-to-Work programs specifically permit states to serve fathers whose children are on welfare, and most responsible fatherhood programs include access to employment and training programs among their activities.

Elaine Sorensen (1999) has examined this issue. Her research shows both the potential for fathers to increase their contributions and the limitations of relying on strategies such as Welfare-to-Work alone. Sorensen's research indicates that, in 1990, 18 million children of 9.5 million noncustodial fathers were potentially eligible for child support. Sorensen found that 46 percent of these fathers indicated that they paid any child support, totaling $18.2 billion in 1998 dollars. She concludes that these fathers would have paid another $35 billion if they had remitted payments at the

levels prescribed by Wisconsin guidelines. Sorensen also notes that many noncustodial parents are ill-equipped to pay reasonable amounts of child support. For example, she finds that 23 percent of noncustodial fathers reported income below 130 percent of the poverty level for two consecutive months, and only 18 percent worked full-time and year-round in 1990.

Conclusion

It is important to track both the financial capacity of fathers and their actual contributions to their children. The measures proposed for contributions address both broad areas. From a program and policy perspective, these indicators will help us to determine the appropriate level and mix of programs to address contribution issues. (Establishment of child support orders and the payment of those orders are the responsibility of state child support enforcement agencies, sometimes referred to as IV-D agencies.) Since responsible fatherhood programs also include the meeting of child support obligations as part of their mission, it will be useful to track the implementation and effectiveness of such programs. As noted above, fatherhood programs also seek to make employment and training available to participating fathers, sometimes by offering these services directly and in other cases by making the appropriate referrals.



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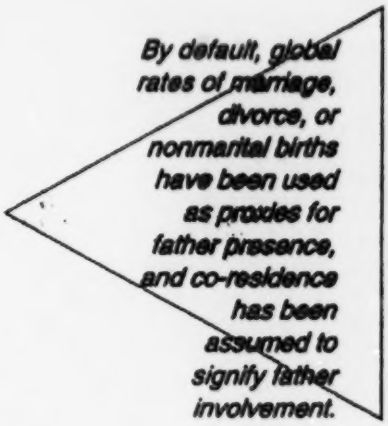
Considerations for Applying the FIF

Traditionally, academic research on families has focused on mothers or children; only recently have researchers become concerned with testing specific hypotheses about fathers. Similarly, most government-sponsored, policy-oriented family research has focused on mothers rather than fathers, even when men were present in the home. By contrast, newer family assistance programs embrace a variety of specific goals relating to the encouragement of father involvement. Program goals have included increasing paternity establishment at birth; teaching parenting skills to new fathers; increasing men's level of child support payments; fostering continuing positive contact between fathers and children; and related enhancement of father-child relations. These programs often serve specific target populations and are typically part of integrated services designed to benefit at-risk populations. Measurement and evaluation strategies, however, have tended to focus on broad indicators of social problems (for example, rates of unemployment, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and child support payment) rather than indicators of fathering in relation to child outcomes. Evaluation measures of father involvement should be designed to assess positive outcomes for fathers, families, and children. The FIF is an evaluation tool developed for assessing such outcomes.

The FIF represents a comprehensive review of what the field considers to be important aspects of father involvement and behavior.

The FIF represents a comprehensive review of what the field considers to be important aspects of father involvement and behavior. The framework's six indicator categories—father presence, caregiving, children's social competence and academic achievement, cooperative parenting, fathers' healthy living, and material and financial contributions—can be used to measure change in fathering behavior and the consequences for child outcomes and family well-being. These indicators are intended to assist in developing and designing programs, monitoring the use of program services, generating data that identify areas for program improvement, and documenting program effectiveness. In addition, the full FIF instrument provides a matrix for each indicator category with cursory listings of

potential sources of information, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods that might be used to collect such information. Depending on the use of the framework, it will be necessary to expand, refine, and tailor these data sources and methods according to a user's specific needs.


By default, global rates of marriage, divorce, or nonmarital births have been used as proxies for father presence, and co-residence has been assumed to signify father involvement.

General Factors

Practitioners, researchers, evaluators, and advocates who are interested in assessing how children and families of men involved in fathering programs are faring, should consider various issues when applying the FIF to their work. In thinking about how to use the FIF and how to interpret the resulting findings, the following six factors should be considered by users to facilitate program and policy development and to conduct research and evaluation studies: (1) the use of naïve dichotomies, such as father presence or absence (see the National Center on Fathers and Families Core Learnings); (2) capturing the father's role as caregiver; (3) capturing cultural variations in defining fathering indicators; (4) over-relying on survey research methods and measures of parental involvement; (5) defining what is meant by the term "father"; and (6) understanding fathers' financial contributions. The implications of these constraints for the development of appropriate indicators are that researchers and practitioners need to construct a more balanced and informed model, both theoretically and methodologically, of fathering and its consequences for children.

Using Naïve Dichotomies. When little is known about the behavior being studied, as is the case with father-child relations, surveys cannot provide a full picture (Federal Interagency Forum, 1998, p. 179). Since fatherhood research is relatively new, it has not always been clear what hypotheses should be tested, especially in large-scale surveys. By default, global rates of marriage, divorce, or nonmarital birth have been used as proxies for father presence, and co-residence has been assumed to signify father involvement. While these institutional and residential arrangements tell us something about potential paternal availability, they do not inform us about actual father-child contact and interaction, or fathers' assumption of responsibility for children. Valid and reliable measures of father-child involvement, such as those recommended in the FIF, should be used whenever possible.

Capturing the Father's Role as Caregiver. Fathers' roles in caregiving continue to both fascinate and frustrate researchers and practitioners. This dilemma is due in part to shifting societal expectations of fathers within the growing complexity of family lives. Indeed, more nuanced and informed models of fathers' caregiving are required. These models should attempt to distinguish fathers' roles as caregivers from those provided by mothers; address the role, if any, of providing economically as a factor in paternal caregiving; and seek to identify the unique character and contributions of caregiving to children's outcomes. The particular contributions of fathers' caregiving on children's outcomes such as socialization and cognitive

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development need to be understood more clearly. Researchers must develop strategies to collect information on community-derived and culturally-based meanings of the father's role as caregiver. These might include how fathers and others in the family and community conceptualize caregiving by fathers, as well as what models of caregiving fathers use in the development of paternal identity and caregiving expectations. In order to capture adequately the father's caregiving role, indicators of caregiving must include the perspectives of children who are cared for by their fathers. In addition, it is critical to understand the development and evolution of caregiving as part of the father's identity, beliefs, and behaviors over the father's life course (Gadsden and Hall, 1996).

Capturing Cultural Variations in Defining Fathering Indicators. Many fathering indicators should be refined in light of different cultural and community values of appropriate paternal roles. Inherent in any construction of fathering indicators are the values and beliefs held by those who have a role in their formulation. Adapting to these values and beliefs appears to be the greatest challenge, particularly when aspects of the father's role may reflect values not shared by all of the constituencies involved in indicator construction.

It may be necessary to develop two levels of indicators—broad indicator categories that are general enough to apply to most communities and more specific variables that capture the concerns, values, and resources of particular communities or family structures.

Portions, or all, of the fathering indicators may be modified, expanded, rejected, or reshaped to reflect particular community-level factors. For example, community values and experiences may inform the meaning of cooperative parenting and how it operates. Similarly, how is a father's contribution to caregiving defined and assessed in communities in which fathers are rarely involved in the solo care of children, but consistently work two or three jobs to support them? If fathers are not expected to care for infants and young children, or are less involved in the care of girls than boys, whose definition of their role should be used in the development of appropriate constructs of caregiving? These issues are complicated by the existence in many communities and neighborhoods of multiple ethnicities and cultures (and variations within those cultures) that make the development of "universal" fathering indicators for all groups problematic. These differences should be acknowledged and, wherever possible, incorporated into the refining of fathering indicators. It may be necessary to develop two levels of indicators—broad categories that are general enough to apply to most communities and more specific variables that capture the concerns, values, and resources of particular communities or family structures.

Over-Relying on Survey Research Methods and Measures on the Amount of Parental Involvement. A significant number of data collection strategies in father involvement studies rely on large-scale surveys with representative samples or small-scale studies that often involve interviews with the mother. Because these data collection strategies are primarily quantitative, they may accurately indicate the amount of father accessibility but fail to capture equally important measures of the quality of father-child interaction or the underlying processes that may be related to father-child interaction.

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It is absolutely essential that data on the nature and quality of father involvement be collected along with the quantity of time spent in various activities and contexts. Assessment of quality can be captured in surveys by adding qualitative questions asking fathers, mothers, and children to assess the affective dimension of fathers' participation in various domains (Lewin Group, 1997). For example, recording the number of minutes per day that the father spends in direct interaction with the child is an important indicator of father presence, but the potential impact of that interaction will be tempered by the qualitative nature of the interaction. Researchers are discovering that how a father, mother, and child feel about an interaction is more consequential than the simple amount of time spent together. Thus, survey questions and observational measures should also assess how people feel about the interactions and availability being assessed by frequency counts. Each of these issues—multi-methods, multi-raters, and quality versus quantity—is extremely important to the assessment of fathering impact. Without such information, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners will not be able to specify the effects of individual, family, and social contexts on specific fathering behaviors, isolate the influence of fathering on children, or identify critical points of intervention for improved child outcomes.

To supplement the types of information that can be collected in sample surveys, it is recommended that intensive observational studies of the interaction patterns of fathers, partners, and children be conducted. Such research allows for discovery and description of the nature of affective, cognitive, and social processes that characterize father involvement (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 1996). It is also important to include qualitative methodologies—focus groups, in-depth interviews, participant observation, case studies, and ethnographic approaches—to study fathers (Coltrane, 1996). Such approaches are especially important at the beginning of the process of selecting relevant variables and refining study questions, but they are also helpful in answering questions about the cultural relevance and meaning of various instruments and data.

It is important to include qualitative methodologies—focus groups, in-depth interviews, participant observation, case studies, and ethnographic approaches—to study fathering impact.

Defining What Is Meant by the Term "Father." Researchers often make assumptions about what is meant by the term "father," typically assuming that "father" refers to biological father. Few studies attempt to ascertain the family's definition of the figure who is doing the work of the father. In some cases, children relate to several individuals who function as father, including the biological father, stepfather, mother's partner, or a male relative who acts as a father to the child. It will be critical in future research to find methods for assessing the involvement of all of these individuals in order to obtain a full picture of the involvement of men in families.

Defining what "father" means also leads to a sampling consideration that relates to the shifting nature of households. Perhaps the most fundamental methodological problem we face in studying fathers is that "the household survey, the basic data gathering tool for demographic and behavioral science research on the family, the labor force, and fertility, was

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based on assumptions that no longer hold" (Federal Interagency Forum, 1998, p. 179). Since the divorce rate and the number of births outside marriage were significantly lower when household surveys were developed in mid-century, it was assumed that complete and accurate information could be collected from a single household, typically in a single visit or phone call. The need to cross household boundaries to obtain accurate information from (and about) fathers—along with the need to focus on at-risk populations and the desire to capture the experiences of men as parents—has encouraged methodological innovations in fatherhood research and promoted a more general review of federal data collection efforts in this area (Federal Interagency Forum, 1998).

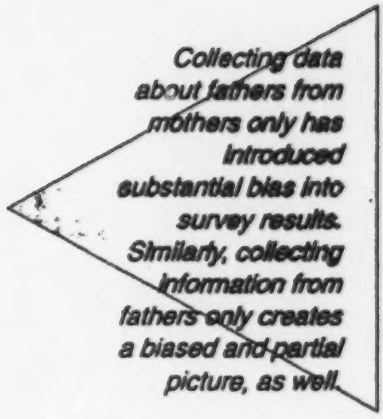
Understanding Fathers' Financial Contributions. Several factors require close attention as programs attempt to track changes in fathers' financial contributions:

1. **Fathers' financial contributions should not be considered in isolation of mothers' financial contributions.** This is particularly important in view of women's growing involvement in the workforce and the increasing number of two-parent families in which fathers stay home with their children while their wives work outside of the home. It would be inappropriate in such families to expect fathers to increase their financial contributions to children when, in fact, their financial contributions are being decreased in these families. A similar comment can be made about families in which both parents are employed. Fathers may chose to take lower paying jobs to have the flexibility to be home with their children while their wives take higher paying jobs with less flexibility. Similarly, increased wages do not necessarily correspond with greater financial contributions to children. While usually important, a father's additional wages do not always benefit their children and family.
2. **Programs should guard against overly simplistic thinking about the association between fathers' financial contributions and child outcomes.** There are numerous potential family changes that may occur as fathers (particularly low-income fathers) increase their financial contributions to children. These changes may apply to both one-parent and two-parent families. For example, mothers may choose to decrease their labor force participation if fathers contribute more to their families. In such families, poverty or near-poverty may persist, even though the father's labor involvement has improved.
3. **Increased family income can be associated with the loss of benefits such as Medicaid and food stamps or of participation in Head Start.** This point is particularly relevant for low-income families which, with increased family income, may become ineligible for such programs when their Temporary Assistance for Needy

The need to cross household boundaries to obtain accurate information from (and about) fathers—along with the need to focus on at-risk populations—has encouraged methodological innovations in fatherhood research and promoted a more general review of federal data collection efforts.

Families (TANF) benefits are discontinued. Fathers as well as mothers may obtain jobs that increase their family income but do not provide medical benefits. The high cost of medical care can more than offset a parent's financial contribution to the family. Programs should be particularly attentive to assessing the quality of fathers' jobs when selecting indicators for evaluation.

By tracking the indicators for father contributions, the field can begin to gauge the extent to which fathers are contributing to their children's well-being. Such an effort may help to identify the conditions and circumstances that enable fathers to contribute positively to their child's development; fathers' particular contributions to child well-being; fathers' role, if any, in keeping children out of poverty; and ways of improving financial contributions to the child and family over time.


Collecting data about fathers from mothers only has introduced substantial bias into survey results. Similarly, collecting information from fathers only creates a biased and partial picture, as well.

Methodological Considerations

Most of the indicators are amenable to data collection using phone, mail, or in-person interviews, as is normally done for sample surveys and federally-assisted program evaluations (Child Trends, 1998; DHHS Fathers' Work Group, 1997; Doolittle and Lynn, 1998; Federal Interagency Forum, 1998; Lewin Group, 1997; National Center for Children in Poverty, 1997, 1999). It is important to note that each proposed indicator can and should be measured using multiple methods and raters. Social scientists, program evaluators, and policymakers agree that multiple methods and data sources are necessary for assessing, understanding, and evaluating father involvement. To understand the social and behavioral processes involved in various fathering practices, to assess fathers' influence on their children, to evaluate service programs for fathers, and to monitor the social impacts of government support for fathers, the field requires a multidimensional approach to research methods and data collection.

In considering methodological approaches to research and data collection, it is important that researchers and evaluators be mindful that identifying different methods is insufficient. It is essential to determine which method is most effective for which purpose and to think carefully about how each method and the data obtained informs the collection of subsequent information. Considerable attention and planning should be given to decisions about the kinds of information that are needed and their application for program development, intervention, policy considerations, or basic research. It leads to a simple but essential question: To what end will the results of a study or evaluation be used?

Collecting data about fathers from mothers only has introduced substantial bias into survey results. Similarly, collecting information from fathers only also creates a biased and partial picture. Indicators of paternal care must include the perspectives of children who receive care in multiple households and from different kinds of paternal figures. Absolute and relative measures of time and frequency should be collected and reported.

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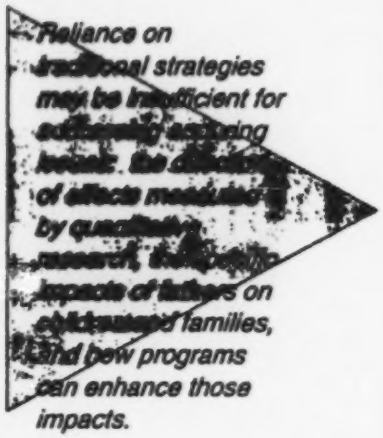

Only by collecting data from mothers, fathers, and children can both types of father involvement measures be constructed. Such measures are essential in any research or evaluation effort to assess the potential impact of father-child involvement on child development.

There is increasing recognition that various research approaches can be compatible and that joint use of alternative data collection strategies can yield a more complete picture of the father's role. For example, multi-stage sampling procedures are becoming more common because they combine the benefits of generalizability from a representative survey sample and deeper understanding from more intensive observational strategies. Recent examples include the studies of the effects of unshared environments on children in stepfamilies (Reiss, Plomin, and Hetherington, 1994). After employing a representative national sampling strategy, these investigators subsequently videotaped the interaction of family members. Although expensive and time-consuming, this staged-sampling, multi-method strategy advanced an understanding of complex issues. Beitel and Parke (1998) utilized a more modest example of this approach in their study of maternal "gatekeeping." A larger sample of mothers was surveyed concerning attitudes toward, and levels of, paternal involvement, and a subsample of this larger group was chosen for observational analysis.

In addition, reliance on traditional strategies may be insufficient for addressing enduring issues: the direction of effects measured by quantitative research, the specific impacts of fathers on children and families, and how programs can enhance those impacts. Although the general goal is to increase the level of father involvement in the hope of improving a child's life chances, experimental interventions to test theoretical propositions are also needed. This recommendation serves as a reminder that intervention (often viewed as an applied concern) and theory testing (often viewed as a basic research theme) are quite compatible. Experimental designs have been underutilized in studies of fathers and fathering support programs. By experimentally modifying either the type of paternal behavior or level of father involvement studied, firmer conclusions concerning the direct causative role that fathers play in modifying their children's and partner's development can be made. Often the use of control groups in experimental studies highlights ethical issues concerning the withholding of needed programs and services for fathers and families. However, the use of waiting lists for control groups in program evaluations is a responsible way to use experimental designs in the assessment of father involvement (Lewin Group, 1997).

Indicators represent basic demographic data that will potentially inform the user of the types and numbers of families to be studied or serviced. Additionally, the framework will inform the user of the potential areas of concern to the father involvement field. One limitation of using the indicators with existing datasets is the lack of information regarding how to obtain more in-depth data from various sources. In other words, these

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indicators tell us only very generally what the potential sources might offer. For example, the number of divorces/separations, the time spent in direct caregiving, or the proportion of fathers employed provide a minimal understanding of the nature and quality of the father's relationship with the child and in the family.

A number of excellent instruments can be considered for use in measuring father involvement indicators (see Appendix). Programs should consider using research instruments that are applicable to the majority of their clients and that help to assess the major objectives of the program. The use of measurement tools may be inappropriate for evaluating all types of programs. For example, it may be inappropriate for a fatherhood program that is designed to improve fathers' employment opportunities and parenting skills to use a measure of domestic violence. Reduction of domestic violence, while an important outcome, may not apply to programs that target employment and parenting skills. While it may not be appropriate to routinely administer an instrument that is incompatible with a program's primary objectives, a practitioner who detects the presence of a particular psychosocial problem in a father may find such tools useful for assessment and referral purposes. Indeed, such tools, when appropriately used, can be most helpful to practitioners whose expertise is in areas other than those addressed by the assessment instrument.

Summary

The challenge in developing appropriate indicators to inform the work of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers lies in the construction of more balanced and informed models of fathering and its effects on children. An expansive vision of what fathering is, what it does, and its consequences for the lives of children and families are at the heart of considerations for applying the FIF.

There is considerable consensus among practitioners and researchers that both quality and quantity of father involvement needs to be assessed. To this end, the indicators must reflect quantitative studies and data sources as well as employ both qualitative and action research methodologies that permit the voices of community, family members, fathers, and children to be heard and the contexts of child rearing to be more fully understood and described. In particular, the definitions of fathers' roles and unique contribution within particular child rearing contexts, and in relation to other caregiving roles, need to be examined systematically. This step is especially important to promote an understanding of cultural variations and their implications for practice, research, and advocacy.

The FIF identifies specific structural, interactional, and contextual indicators of father involvement. At the same time, many national, regional, and administrative data sources are beginning to include information on fathers.

The FIF identifies specific structural, interactional, and contextual indicators of father involvement. At the same time, many national, regional, and administrative data sources are beginning to include information on fathers. In addition, it is essential to collect data using various measures of child outcomes (variables assessing the social, emotional, and

academic development, competence, and well-being of the child) and diverse research approaches. To better understand the behavioral processes and outcomes of fathering practices and to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of fathering programs, authentic and reliable indicators are critical. It is our hope that the FIF will stimulate thinking about how to assess fathering and all its implications more effectively in the future.

To better understand the behavioral processes and outcomes of fathering practices and to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of fathering programs, authentic and reliable indicators are critical.

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Appendix: Data Sources and Instruments

Data Sources

PSID (Panel Study of Income Dynamics) at http://www.umich.edu/~psid/

The study includes demographic variables, income and sources of income, family structure variables, and socioeconomic and health information. It also includes a Child Development Supplement, which has collected caregiver, absent parent, and teacher information. The PSID Web site includes information on obtaining a user's guide, on the sample, and on core topics and supplemental files.

NLS-Y (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth) at http://stats.bls.gov/nlsmrdut.htm

The survey includes data on demographic characteristics, child health, cognitive development, motor skills, and emotional and behavioral information. Although this dataset focuses on maternal information, data are included on marital history, household composition, maternal spouse characteristics, and income of spouse. The NLS-Y Web site includes lists of specific measures and years administered.

NSFH (National Survey of Families and Households) at http://ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh

This dataset includes household composition, marriage and cohabitation history, social background of spouse, educational expectations for the child, and difficulty in dealing with the child. The Web site includes specific descriptions of the variables surveyed at each collection time, to whom the survey was administered, and whether or not the data were self-reported.

Add Health at http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth

This dataset includes school questionnaire data completed by school administrators and adolescents. Also included is information gained from in-home interviews regarding education, health, household composition, nonresident biological father, and child-parent relationships. The Web site includes downloadable codebooks with lists of questions and variable names, as well as information on data recording process.

Instruments

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)

This scale is used to measure the degree to which partners in dating, cohabiting, or married couple relationships engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other. It also measures the extent to which partners use reasoning and negotiation to resolve conflicts.

Source: Straus, M.A., and S.L. Hamby. 1996. The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2): Development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of Family Issues.*

The Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAP)

The CAP was designed as a screening tool for the detection of physical child abuse and should be used in conjunction with other assessment strategies. This instrument can be employed as a pre-treatment and post-treatment measurement instrument. The primary scales of the CAP Inventory include: distress, rigidity, unhappiness, problems with child and self, problems with family, and problems from others

Source: Milner, J.S. 1986. *The Child Abuse Potential Inventory Manual,* Second Edition. DeKalb, IL: Psytec.

The Parenting Stress Inventory (PSI)

The PSI is a widely used instrument for the early identification of stressful parent-child systems. This instrument also can be used to assess the success of intervention efforts aimed at reducing parent-child stress or behavioral and emotional disturbances among children. The PSI contains two major domains—Child and Parent. The Child Domain assesses the extent to which children possess qualities that make it difficult for parents to fulfill their parenting roles. The Parent domain assesses the degree to which the parent has characteristics that make it difficult to fulfill parenting responsibilities.

Source: Abidin, R. R. 1995. *Parenting Stress Index,* 3rd Edition. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

The Addiction Severity Index (ASI)

The ASI can be used to assess history of substance abuse and includes items that address past use of substances for one month or longer and being treated for drug or alcohol problems. The substances include alcohol, marijuana, "downers," "uppers," cocaine, crack, hallucinogens, inhalants, heroin, methadone, or any other drug.

Source: McLellan, A.T., L. Luborsky, G.E. Woody, and C.P. O'Brien. 1980. An improved evaluation instrument for substance abuse patients: The Addiction Severity Index. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders.* 168: 26-33.

The Inventory of Father Involvement (IFI)

The IFI can be used to measure mother and father perceptions of fathers' abilities to relate competently to their children. Respondents are asked to consider "how good a job" the father does on nine dimensions of father involvement, including discipline and teaching responsibility, school encouragement, mother support, providing, time and talking together, praise and affection, developing talents and future concerns, reading and homework support, and attentiveness.

Source: Hawkins, A.J., K.P. Bradford, S.L. Christiansen, R. Palkovitz, V.R.A. Call, and R. Day. 1999. *The inventory of father involvement: A pilot study of a new measure of father involvement.* Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, Irvine, CA.

The Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ)

The ROFQ can be used to assess beliefs about the importance of a father's role in children's development. This instrument contains 15 items that solicit parents' beliefs about the ability of men to spend quality time interacting with children while simultaneously meeting their psychological needs.

Source: Palkovitz, R. 1984. Parental attitudes and fathers' interactions with their 5-month-old infants. *Developmental Psychology.* 20: 1054-1060.